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## Margin Architecture: A Critique and Recuperation of Social Relations Within Architecture

Michael McAtee

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# **MARGIN**

## **ARCHITECTURE:**

***A Critique and Recuperation  
of Social Relations within  
Architecture***

**Michael McAtee**

**12-7-00**

**Committee: Prof. Laura Auerbach**

**Prof. Larry Davis**

**Prof. Art McDonald**



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# PROPOSITION

*There is no obligatory sequence whatsoever for the processes applied in the initial stage of work on any design. Very much depends on intuition, and what is still known as "creative imagination." No work of any kind is possible, of course, on the conception of any structure without some preliminary study of the technical and economic features of the task in hand.*

- Konstantin Melnikov

*The conflict over the assignment of certain goals to certain spatial forms will be one of the fundamental mechanisms of domination and counter domination in the social structure.*

- Rosalyn Deutsche

The discipline of architecture all too often merely grasps at social reality, and rarely endeavors to rationally analyze the conditions of the society in which architectural production takes place. I posit, however, that establishing a working concept of cultural production is absolutely necessary before any architectural work can take place. The structure of this proposal therefore extends as a developed, rational argument, defining the marginalizing nature of social relations in the present culture, defining how current architectural forms operate to reinforce these relations, investigating a recuperative program and precedents and finally situating this work within an appropriate site. All of these parts are *essential* elements within this thesis, and *cannot* proceed without them. It is only through this process that an assertion for an architecture for the recuperation of spatial production of social relations within the everyday can occur.



## MARGIN SOCIETY

*A bandage covers and treats a wound while at the same time exposing its presence. Its presence signifies both the experience of pain and the hope of recovery. Is it possible to develop this concept further? Could we invent a bandage that would communicate, interrogate, and articulate the circumstances and the experience of the injury? Could such a transformed bandage address the ills of the world outside as perceived by the wounded? To see the world as seen by a wound! [Wodiczko 1999: 9-10]*

Architecture, perhaps inadvertently, masks social reality. The architect labors to create beauty, to produce a momentary utopic condition, while simultaneously operating as the tool of the society of megalomaniacal consumption that is late-capitalist America. All efforts at creating the utopic in architecture are tropes of equality. Social reality is not that a vast middle class dictates the desires and values of culture, but that the vast majority of culture, following Marx, exists within a marginalized condition of social relations. The myth of equivalency of power within the 'classless' society of twenty-first century America is propagated through the spatial assemblages of the architect, but concurrently this myth is revealed through the spatial relationships within the landscape. The irony of late-capitalism, or perhaps more accurately, technological capitalism, is that perceptual equality convinces the popular imagination of the wounds within society, while masking the truth that society is in and of itself the wound. Unable to see the fire for the smoke, architecture serves not as bandage to the wound of the marginalized, but as a narcotic veiling the pain through a numbness of sensation. By failing to address the wound, architecture serves also to increase the sense of alienation and marginalization because the act of architecture is inherently a practice that defines social relations. *Therefore, the logical response is that an architecture conscious of its role within social production must be instituted, an architecture that will communicate the experience of the marginalized in everyday life, and will empower the individual by reconstituting the social and personal identity masked by the mythical constructions of technological capitalism.*

In order to support an architecture that reveals the experience of marginalization, or a marginal architecture, the logic (or chaotic movement) behind the society of the mask must itself be exposed. The conditions which have created the void of the communal, the paradoxical marginalized majority, must first be determined and revealed through its processes and symptoms, including the loss of identity through alienation and economic stratifications. Next, how the mythical mask deceives the masses will be explained through the mythification of culture by the spectacles of technological fascism, which displaces meaning from referential reality, distracting the populous from true social relations. With these cultural positions established, it then becomes possible to discuss the expressions of architecture in relation to the majority and mask and how architecture operates as a tool of the dominant rather than the marginal. From within the matrix of the myth, with its forms and processes dissected, an architecture for the margin can finally be posited.

## MAJORITY AS MARGINALIZED

In order to grasp the concept of a marginalized majority one must understand that the masses are subjugated at an everyday level, and to act within the everyday requires one to understand that all conventions of culture – pleasure, family, home – are artificial constructions, and without being critical of the how and why of their existence, there can be no meaningful contribution to a discourse. An analysis or even summary of all the conventions of everyday life are infinitely beyond the scope of the present work, but the



artificial constructions of everyday life are of utmost importance once the analysis of spatial relations is preformed. A general explanation of marginalization through a basic critique of the alienation of technological capitalism will provide a basis for a further specific critique of these processes within everyday architectural spaces.

The mode of cultural production at the end of the millennium is of technological capitalism, which operates much as in the classical models of capitalism, by objectifying the individual through the atomization of labor, but is accelerated, as everyday life now becomes dependant upon incomprehensible technologies portrayed as necessities in consumer culture. Within the logic of consumption the concept of individuality is being unilaterally globalized and subsumed into a mass, where difference has become a superficial concept peddled by a consumer capitalism that must constantly develop new audiences for consumption in order to exist. Technological capitalism is an expansionist mode of culture (Jenks 1993: 127), not to be confused with a progressive culture, which operates primarily under the dictates of consumption. The processes of technological capitalism (globalization and inaccessible technologies) enable the marginalization of the majority by spreading the matrix of domination ephemerally thin over a worldwide scale.

The individual is alienated from the processes of the production of culture in an unprecedented manner, for now, only a meager few individuals are capable of understanding the technology on which society depends for its operation. Yet, while few understand the workings of the technology, all are subject to the fascinating spectacle that it projects into the environment, and increasingly the body is being trained as a cybernetic monitor for this technology. While in industrial society the individual is objectified by converting him/her into a tool, a cog in the wheel of production (Lefebvre 1991: 166), in technological capitalism, the very body of the individual is dematerialized, becoming an absent mark of technology. The body becomes dematerialized in "the translation of the world into a problem of coding, a search for the common language in which all resistance to instrumental control disappears and all heterogeneity can be submitted to disassembly, reassembly, investment and exchange"(Haraway 1985: 265). The body is a s(c)ensored object for which technology only liberates the need for labor by producing a slavery to a means of existence that is impenetrable. The negation of body and identity, through the disintegrating action of information, leads to the alienation of the individual.

The globalization technological capitalism enforces not only the marginalization of the individual, but also the marginalization of collective associations of community. The cybernetic message is one in which the world is excluded, within this "signal you enter into the realm not only of total fascination, but of mobilized immobilization" (Dewey 1997: 270), where everything but the NOW of life is blocked. The technological focuses the individual back upon itself; indeed, the operation of the cybernetic is a biofeedback process of internal information processing. The neutralization of physical engagement through technological means – computers, telephones, television, automobiles, etc. – alters all human relations and signifies the marginalization of the public.

## **MYTHICAL MASK OVER THE MARGINALIZED**

The mythical mask is that in society which simultaneously contributes to the development of marginalizing forces (mythical) while concealing the reality of the marginal (mask). As Nan Ellin delineates, resistance to power becomes increasingly difficult as power becomes increasingly invisible: "A growing perception of greater equality among people both nationwide and worldwide – plied largely by the various mass media – accompanies and legitimizes growing inequalities."(1997: 36) The operations of this mythical mask occur at several levels, which shall be outlined as following, centering primarily on the



structural relationships of the simulacrum and the propagation of this myth through the devices of the media, the image and cultural reproduction.

The mask serves to disguise the reality of an alienated populous, replacing objective reality with a facade, an illusory front of equality and satiation. This imag(in)ed reality of the mask is produced by the simulacrum. The simulacrum is the mode of existence within technological capitalism, which camouflages a growing inequality between economic classes (castes?) and a loss of human relations at all levels (the cybernetic). The 'real' is not a function of human action within a physical reality, but is a displaced post-reality, which is most obviously filtered through the artifices of the media and image and the forms of the built environment. Through the media and the actions of the image, meaning is debased. Baudrillard is among the first to identify that systems of referentiality are destroyed by the image:

*All of Western faith and good faith was engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could exchange for meaning and that something could guarantee this exchange – God, of course. But what if God himself could be simulated, that is to say reduced to the signs that attest his existence? Then the whole system becomes weightless; it is no longer anything but a giant simulacrum. (Baudrillard "Simulacra": 170)*

The image does not then refer to reality, but to the nebulous web of signifiers, which are displaced within the system intertextuality that simply refers back to itself, and not an external physical reality. Look simply to the trend in post-modern architecture wherein displaced signifiers attempt to refer to a historic scenography in order to rouse a sense of nostalgia. The simulacrum is unable to produce a meaningful set of social relations, and, as Celeste Olalquiaga writes, as technological capitalism becomes aware of a loss, "it attempts to compensate with a baroque saturation and the obsessive reiteration of fragmented memories." (1992: xxi) The result of this loss, this marginalization of individuals from themselves and each other, produces a mask that attempts to drown alienation in the sea of technologically mediated imagery.

The mass media is the primary pervader of cultural marginalization, through the creation of elaborate myths attached to an array of ephemeral products. In such a system, where an individual is told that a consumable product is a secret catalyst to the acquisition of traditional symbols of success, it seems only natural that the individual will be unable to differentiate between 'reality' and the simulacrum. The condition of existing within this landscape of gross simulation, where physical reality is often an indeterminate construct, is the retreat of the individual from the dialogues of secular reason to a position ruled by un/conscious mythologies, the psychic implication of the simulacrum. Advanced technology is also a culprit in the creation of this myth, as Margaret Wertheim details in a comparative analysis between heaven and the bodiless, limitless, reality-transcending realm of the Internet. Like the growth in the popularity of Christianity for its mythical transcendent visions during the fall of the Roman Empire, the enormous popularity of the Internet can likewise be associated with the collapse of the American state as public/political realm. (1997: 295-300) Technological capitalism is demarcated by an alienation that structures social relations by negating the production of collective social relations while masking this negation. Rather than a production of the collective, social relations are masked and represented through the image/media: the communal as a consumable entity.

The mythical mask not only disguises social reality, but, through the very 'real' simulations producing collective memory, actively contributes to the formation of social relationships. The theories of cultural reproduction, defined by Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1970's, provide a theory for the propagation of the mask from one generation to the next. Summarily, this theory states that "the function of the education system (is) to 'reproduce' the culture of the dominant classes, thus helping to ensure their continued dominance and perpetuate their covert exercise of power." (Jenks 1993: 1) The system of



reproduction utilizes the simulacrum, for culture is inherently an artificial condition (the antithesis of the natural) and based therefore on arbitrary systems of power. Without producing a relative illusion of fairness and equality, the mythical mask would not only not function, but could not exist. The removal of this mask would not only be a revolutionary act, but would be a denial of all cultural knowledge: it would be the cathartic revelation of alienation.

The systems of the simulacrum and the mask ensure the continuation of marginalization, as seen within the similitude of the actual and the simulacrum in the mind of the child. Two boys, one from an inner city and one from an affluent suburb describe an imaginary walk, and both relate nearly identical tales of crime where many people were being killed and in the end both boys were shot. The poorer children describe lived experiences laced with contempt for the rich while the wealthy discuss fears of violence generally associated with the poor and colored people. "The socialization of children – especially well-to-do children – into fear of the other contributes to their increasing need to be separate, which, in turn, leads the next generation of adults to engage in higher levels of destruction to the physical and social fabric of society to maintain their separateness." (Sutton 1997: 241-242) The cultural reproduction of the mythical mask ensures that the alienation and marginalization of individuals can only increase with time.

## **MARGINALIZING ARCHITECTURE**

Architecture potentially exists as a method for the recuperation of the public and communal from marginalization, but predominately serves as a marginalizing device and masking apparatus. Architecture (un)consciously creates landscapes of oppression, which it concurrently masks through the utopic language of architectural production, serving merely to neutralize any recombinatory discourse. Without an awareness of the conditions of marginalization, architects serve merely as another device of the cultural reproduction of alienation. Moreover, architecture often actively reinforces marginalization within the environment. Evidence of this can be found throughout the landscape; surveillance technologies, the spatial dislocation of commercial spaces, social control through built forms such as gated communities and landscapes devoid of sidewalks. "The security obsession is fueled by fears of complex social change and inequitable resource distribution... Segmentation of the socio-spatial realm" is the attempt to maintain an embattled social consensus. (Flusty 1997: 57) Rosalyn Deutsche explains that the creation of space is a violent act of exclusion; this violence is but another wound that is imposed in the creation of power relations through the processes of separation, which causes alienation and marginalization.

Just as architecture actively participates in the degradation of social relations through various means, architecture may potentially formulate a recuperation of social relations. The marginal is not an exceptional condition, but the condition of everyday life. An investigation of the spaces of everyday life, those which are encountered by the marginalized individual within the landscape of the mythical mask, can inform the production of an architecture which can begin to recuperate individual and communal social relations. Through a series of case studies of the spaces of the everyday, and analysis of the organizational protocols of technological capitalism, the postulation of an architecture for the marginalized becomes possible.

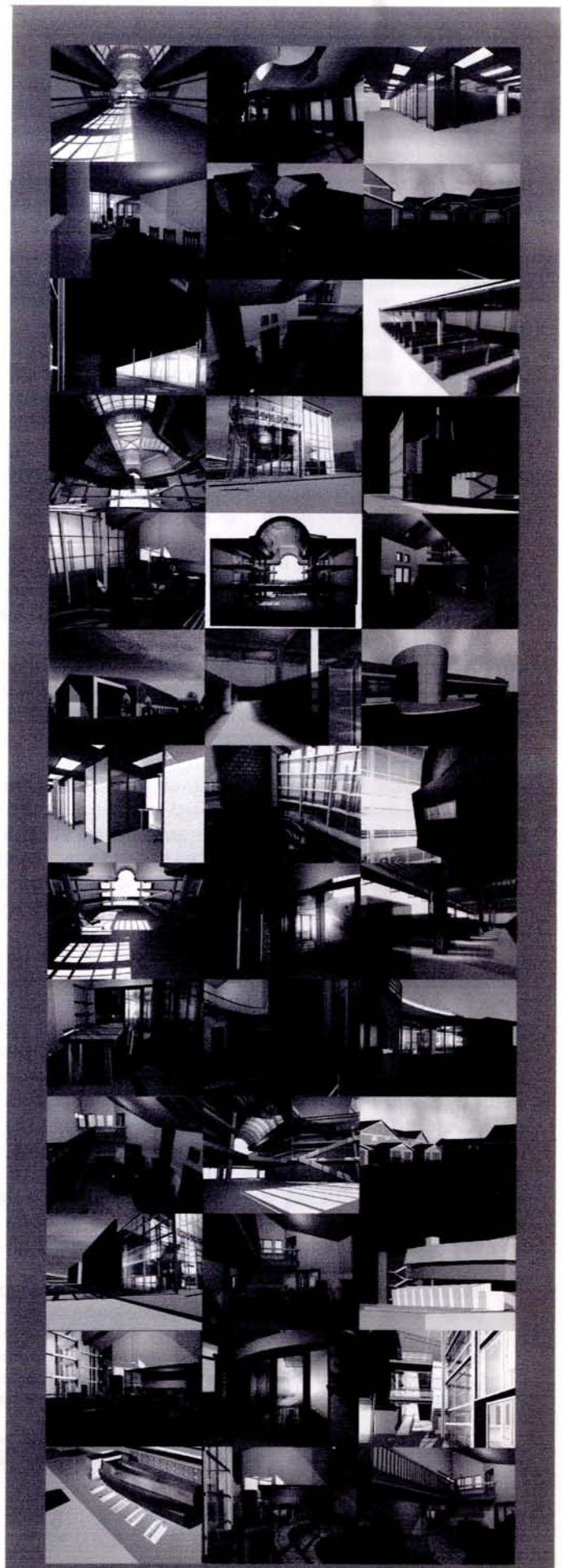


# CASE STUDIES

The translation of the marginalized majority into an architectural manifestation occurs at the level of everyday architecture. In order to propose an architectural order which is the antithesis of the marginalizing everyday, the behavior of the spaces of the marginal must first be elucidated. The case studies for this analysis consist of those spaces which are most commonly experienced within the archetype of the everyday; the shopping mall, single-family house, office workplace and warehouse-type superstore. While each case study will investigate the specific spatial relationships found within these spaces, a general introduction of the shared qualities of these everyday places grounds the discussion within the dialogues of the mythical mask. The two issues at stake here are the interchangeability, repetition and neutralization by the everyday, and the necessity of the representation to give authority to the everyday.

Everyday architecture is the superficial polarity of the architecture of the celebrity architect. The everyday consists of the unassuming repetition of form and language according to building type. A split level home is a split level home in rural Alabama and the suburbs of New Jersey, a Wal-Mart is a Wal-Mart in Nebraska and Ontario. The everyday is the diffusion of signs throughout the environment, where a complete interchangeability of spaces occurs: the landscape of the technological comes then to resemble the processes of industrial production where the mass production of parts leads to a standardized end product. The landscape becomes an interchangeable kit of parts, wherein the individual can quickly assimilate to his/her environment regardless of geographic location. The potential for a recombinatory architecture, which empowers the individual within an everyday routine, is quite strong within this framework. Unfortunately, the reality that exists is that familiarity breeds complacency, this due to the fact that these interchangeable artifacts neither relate to each other in any significant manner nor provide an empowering space for the individual. Rather, this kit of parts acts as a dissociated series of moments that operates merely as symbols, and serve to continue the marginalization of the majority/individual.

Existing everyday architecture essentially ends in a neutralization of any possible beneficent results within the environment. This architecture exists as merely as a symbol of what it intends to be; to be a mall, a mall must BE A MALL. In other words, reality depends upon its representation in order to gain its authority. (Olalquiaga 1991: 4-5) The collective imagination of what a mall is, what a house should be, are those things which define what in reality they become; the simulacrum turns and defines the real. It is in this spirit that the following case studies are carried out. Modeled from photographs and personal experiences, these imag(in)ed 'real' spaces embody the conceptions of everyday architecture critically re-presented. In the form of perspectives, the following images and diagrams relate the experience of the individual within the spaces of the everyday: through a critical analysis these diagrams provide the foundation for an architecture that can critique these representations, that can become an architecture FOR the marginalized.





# CASE STUDIES 1:

## Spectacular Space

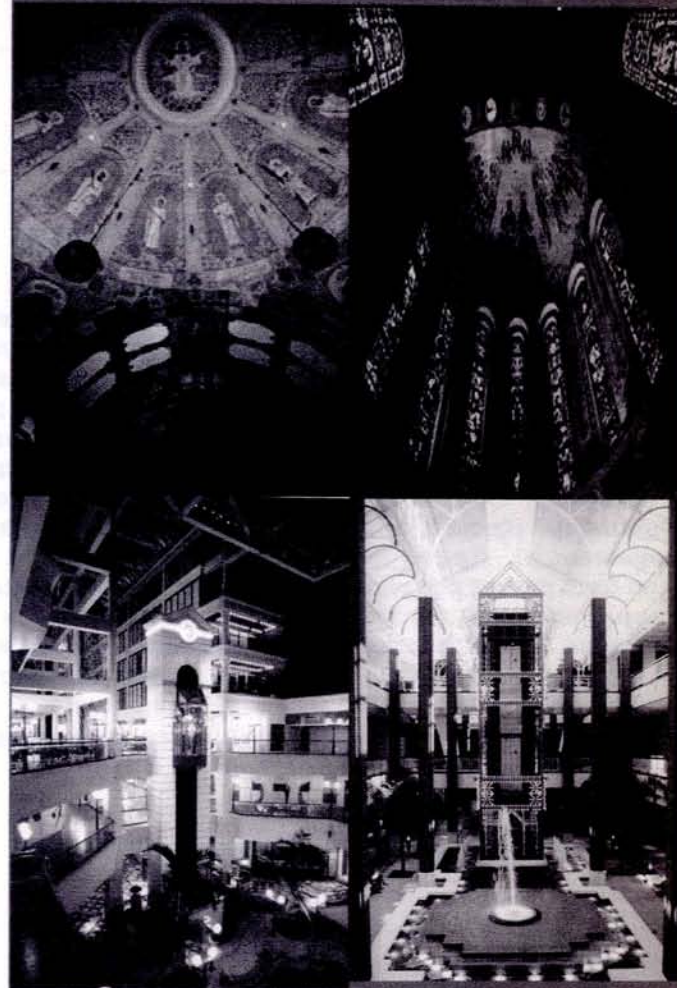
*Architectural transparency, for example, transforms shopping malls into a continuous window display where the homogeneity of store windows, stairs, elevators and water fountains causes a perceptual loss... Dislocated by this ongoing trompe l'oeil, the body seeks concreteness in the consumption of food and goods, saturating its senses to the maximum. (Olalquiaga 1991: 2)*

A vast literature exists describing the conditions of the magnificently absurd environment of the shopping mall. A rigorously constructed and controlled environment, given completely to the forces of consumption, this absurd landscape epitomizes the conditions of the mythical mask. Contradictorily, the shopping mall postures as the new "town center" for the American landscape, but exists as a heavily monitored space where basic rights such as free speech are explicitly banned. The right of exclusion within the mall was upheld within the highest court of the land in *Hudgens vs NLRB* (1976)(Judd 1995: 154). Hence, what is often popularly characterized as a new public space operates only through the voluntary (or unwitting) suspension of the rights of the individual.

The exclusionary nature of the mall is much more than an administered condition; the spatial conditions of the mall epitomize the violence inherent in the creation of space. The process of exclusion is always ultimately an act of power, but one which depends upon its alterity for authorization. In other words, the space of the mall derives its power from explicitly denying all the features of "public" life which are undesirable - crime, poverty, homelessness - going so far as to literally block any view of the external world which might conjure any unpleasant thought. The mall creates the ideal environment not for public life, but for the spectacle of consumption.

The market has always been viewed as a center of public life, yet conversely, the market has always been the site of the spectacle as well. From within the open market, with roaming crowds gazing anonymously at one another, came the very concept of marketing, the focusing of the gaze of autonomous individuals. "A crowd is formed around a common but not shared stopping point, a brief halt in a multitude of independent trajectories." (Slater 1995: 190) The spectacle is the device which draws the attention of the crowd, and with the enclosure of the market the spectacle becomes an encompassing commodification of all the crowds' points of focus into a dreamworld of mass consumption. (Slater 1995: 196-198) In both form and function the shopping mall epitomizes the spectacular space.

The mall as a landscape of spectacle does provide some opportunities for a reconstitution of social relations, for the spectacle is a method for focusing the gaze of the crowd. The spectacle is the break of the gaze, the punctuation of events within the tedious routine of everyday life; the enormous popularity of the malls attest to the success of the spectacle. However, with the spectacle as a co-opted agent of consumption of technological capitalism, the saturation of the environment with 'spectacular' images and events marginalizes the ability of the spectacle to act as a reconstituting force. It is with this view that the exclusionary spectacular spaces of the mall are analyzed.



*The spectacular space of the shopping mall not only operates in the same manner as a cathedral, but also mimics its forms. The cathedral is an exclusionary space of God; what is Holy is separated from the life of the everyday through a physically dense screen. The exterior is blocked out such that light barely gains admittance to the interior, an interior bedecked in form and dazzling ornament. The crowds are drawn to this built spectacle for this very reason: the church is an escape, a break from the everyday, a punctuation of routine.*

*The mall copies the format of the church in the attempted creation of a realm of fantastic un-reality. Landscapes of light and form reside within the completely exclusionary realm of mass consumption; the conscious memory of everyday life seems to melt away. The nave runs the course of the mall, the pilgrims travel up and down its aisles, stopping in every shrine along the way, never occupying the domed central crossing for their pious journeys along the commodified periphery. The spectacle of God has been replaced by the spectacle of the image.*



**DIAGRAM 1:** The paradigm of the shopping mall embodies the concept of *spectacular space*. The mall is the capitalist reincarnation of the church as festival site. Structurally and spatially magnificent, the mall is saturated by brilliant and exotic eye-candy. What was once an intermittent and significant ritual experience in earlier cultures has become part of the everyday 'ritual' of consumption. In roller-coaster laden technological capitalism, to create the spectacular requires an ever expanding paraphernalia of tricks, innovations and monumentality. The spectacle is a necessary part of society, it is the site of individual release and the break from the everyday, but when coupled with the consumer landscape of the mall becomes a commodified and hollow experience. The ability to create spectacle within the everyday, if still possible, must rely not on artifices of display and visual stimulus or the monumental, but rather a recuperation in material and spatial juxtapositions.

**DIAGRAM 2:** The production of spectacular space, in addition to monumentality, is produced by materials and surfaces creating the conditions of refraction and reflection. These surfaces create a condition of *refracted vision* where the individual views multiple actions within a single plane of vision. The gaze is split between multiple fields, refracted through and reflected by glass planes, returned directly by mirrors, alternately blocked and absorbed by dense surfaces, and ceaselessly obfuscated by constant motion and surreal lighting. The measure of artificiality within the diffracted vision of the individual creates a sense of dislocation and disembodiment, which leads to the alienation of the body. The concepts of reflection and refraction are integral to the production of space within an architectural construct which must be used particularly, for when implemented as a saturating technique serves only to confuse the space and body.

Diagram 1: Spectacular space

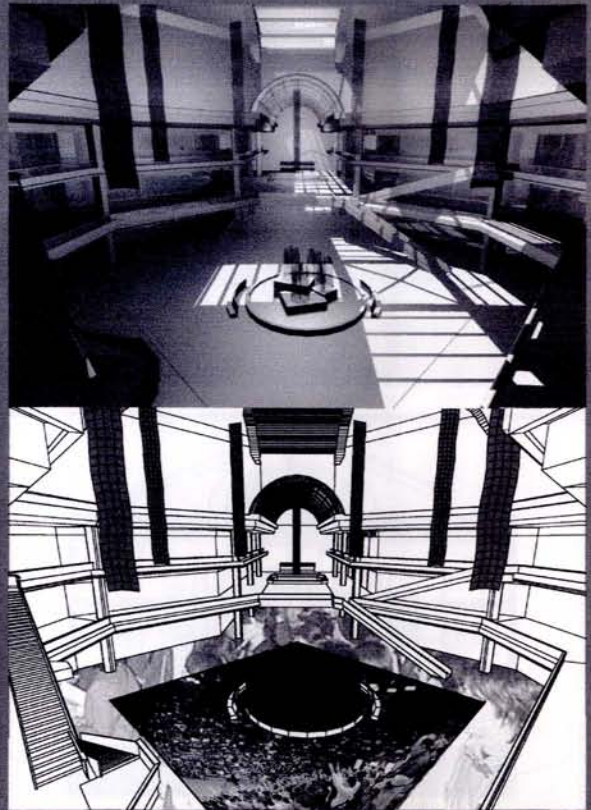
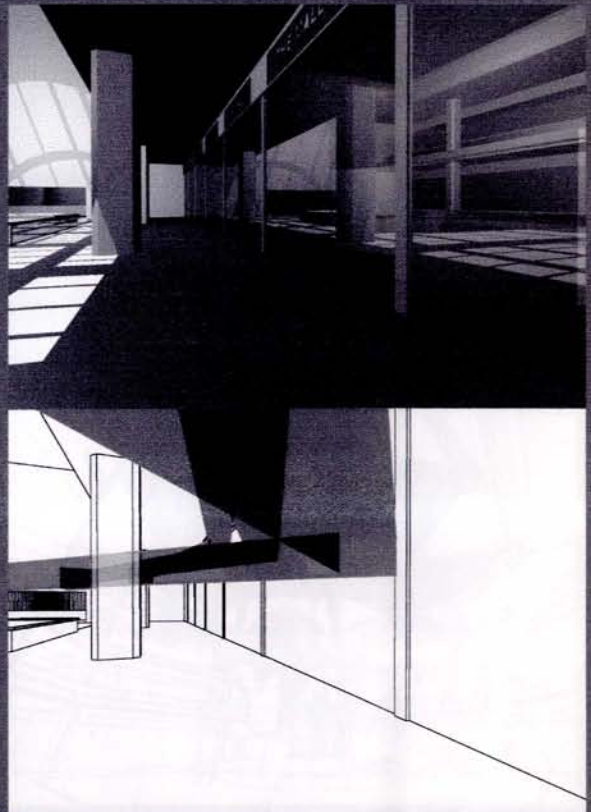


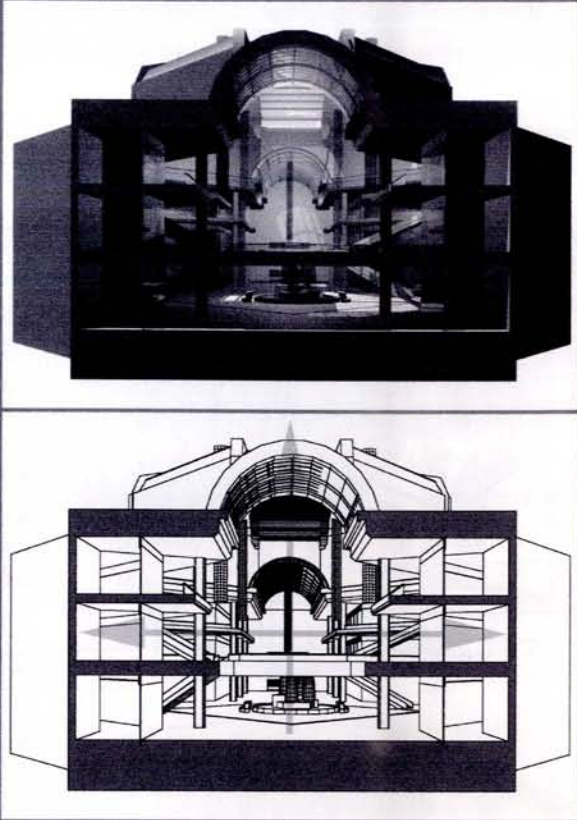
Diagram 2: Refracted vision





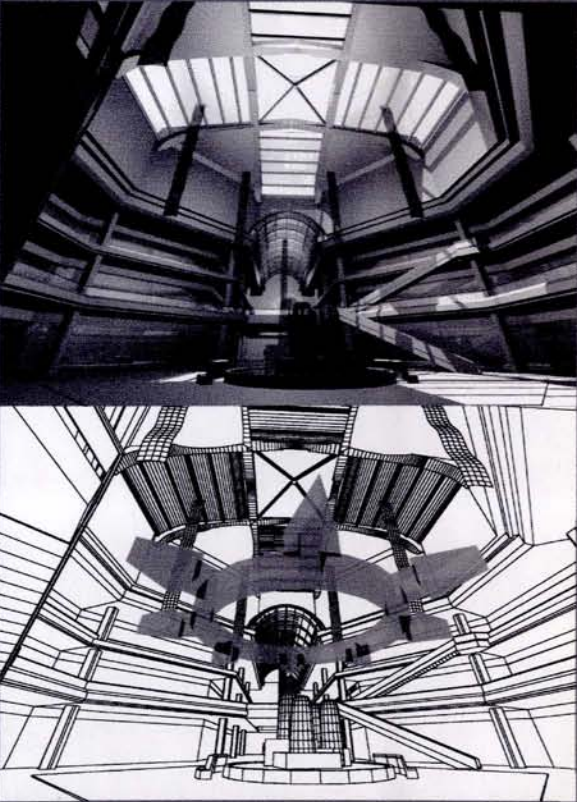
**DIAGRAM 3:** The exclusion of external conditions of reality within the spectacular space occurs through *bound space*. The bound space of the mall differs from other appearances of enclosed space, such as a gymnasium or auditorium, in that the primary function of this exclusion is to suspend the reality of the external world without revealing its intent. By structurally denying all external features of real social relations, the microcosm of the spectacular is strengthened and unquestioned, for the possibility of all external relations are eliminated. The enclosure of space is a necessary element of architectural production, but, when binding individuals to a subjugating condition, it is an alienating force.

Diagram 3: Bound space



**DIAGRAM 4:** The spatial organization of the mall ensures a constant circulation and disorientation of individuals within the bowels of its labyrinthine structure. This *dispersive space* arises from a system in which large central spaces are denied as all central spaces are designed to be visual catches, icons of the spectacular, rather than occupied space. The common areas of the mall are constituted by two main elements; corridors and halls. The corridor leads throughout the mall and is the common boulevard by which all access to stores is provided. This extremely wide route is split through the middle, occupied by vendors, trees and the occasional bench, or voided to the floor below in multi-level malls. At the intersection of the corridors are large hall-type spaces, which contain the main routes of vertical circulation around their periphery, but deny occupation of the center of the space either actively with some object, or by leaving it ambiguously vacant. In all instances, the goal of dispersive space is to create a condition of continual flow and to deny the possibility of congregation and the communal, completely marginalizing social relations in order to facilitate consumption.

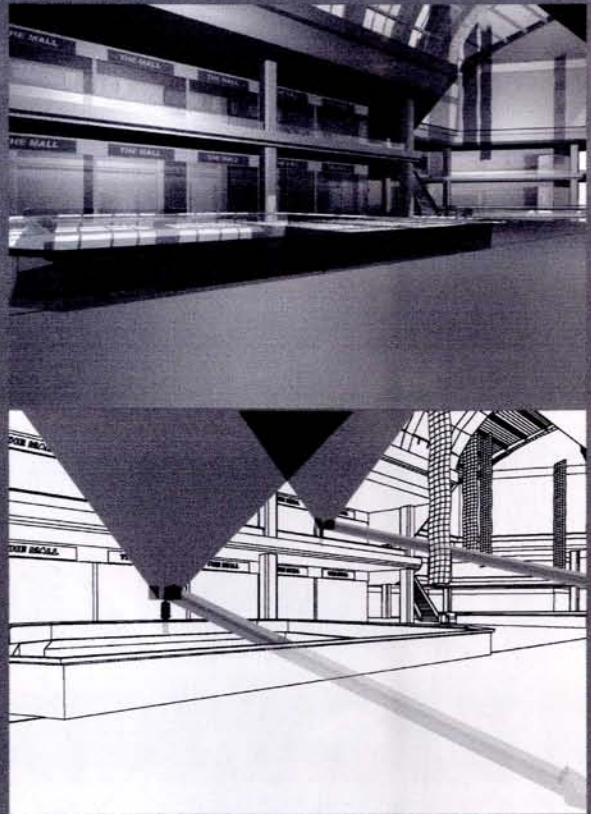
Diagram 4: Dispersive space





**DIAGRAM 5:** Despite the efforts of the mall developers to discourage any activity other than sensory saturated consumption, the spatial arrangement of the mall enables *voyeuristic space*. By forcing the gaze into the voided center of the mall, through either reflection or direct gaze across multiple levels, the mall develops into a unique site for the practices of the voyeur. As the body is masked by the intensity of the saturation of the gaze, the voyeur is empowered, gaining control over space through his/her panoptic eye. By eluding the dictates of dispersive space and stopping the body, the voyeur gains control over the self and his/her environment. While the panoptic design of the mall allows the possibility of the voyeur, it is only through the resistance of the designed spaces of a marginalizing system that this empowerment is realized. While the validity of voyeurism as a recuperative social relation is debatable, this diagram indicates that the utilization of space for spatial relations will transcend design, even that the resistance to design provides the opportunity for the recombination of social relations.

Diagram 5: Voyeuristic space





# CASE STUDIES 2:

## Archival Space

*You can get anything you want at Wal-Mart. The fact that you want it means that you are already dead. (Indiana 1999: 10)*

The Wal-Mart is an unpretentious, undifferentiated box for consumption. Increasingly, the market of consumption seems to be moving towards the economy of the big box; from groceries to lumber, from maternity wear to high fashion, the warehouse epitomizes the concept of mass consumption. Everything you ever needed is under one roof, "function and process dictate form and movement: unambiguous, evenly lit commodities differentiated by category on cost-accounted, highway-like shelving; checkouts like tollbooths at the end of the road or like time clocks at the entrance to the assembly line." (Slater 1999: 201) The Wal-Mart/warehouse seems to be a blatant image of a culture of consumption, not even offering the release of the spectacle of the mall, and yet, these enormous archives of consumption flourish nationwide.

The function of the big box is to facilitate the ease of consumption; within the four walls of this structure lies the complete organization of all aspects of life. The conflagration of all items of consumption signifies the utter resolution of tensions within society. (Baudrillard *Consumer Society*: 34) Life is archived for the individual down convenient aisles and departments. The product is sold within the environment of the big box warehouse not through the chaotic spectacle of the shopping mall, but the comfort of simple abundance.

The big box may be one of the most marginalizing spaces within the landscape of technological modernism. The completely neutral archival treatment of individual and product alike, in scale and organization, marginalizes both body and identity. Amazingly, the enormous success of this typology indicates that as a culture we are readily willing to trade quality for quantity. The Wal-Mart leads to the alleviation of tension within the everyday by providing the most efficient condensation of the drudgery of consuming. The alleviation of tension is obviously one of the individual's highest priorities, but at the expense of the self it is undoubtedly not the ideal resolution.





**DIAGRAM 1:** The *archival space* of the Wal-Mart is the condition of complete neutrality. Within the single big box volume all items are separated and categorized along clearly labeled and repetitive aisles. There is no preference given to one aisle over another; this is the unambiguous statement of equivocality of both consumables and consumers. The non-preferential organization of space within the big box is the architectural manifestation of the obsolescence inherent in technological capitalism, for items and even entire inventories or store can change nearly instantaneously. The big box is not only a disregard for the body, but also a possible signifier of the death of architecture within the realm of the everyday, to be replaced simply by an economy of construction. Without architecture being rooted within the everyday, architecture becomes merely a function of elite cultural institutions and its castes.

**DIAGRAM 2:** The panopticon was devised as a method by which one individual could control a vast territory of space. The antithesis of the panopticon is found here in the *perspectival space* of the Wal-Mart. The view of the individual is controlled such that the body actually loses almost complete control of space. Movement is limited to a rigorous straight line, with a single, forced vanishing point controlling the view of the individual. If the body is to turn to either the right or left, it is presented with the veritable wall of consumable space which demarcates its limits, offering no reprieve or break in view. (See diagram 4.) Thus, the neutral space of organization and obsolescence becomes a bounded and marginalizing perspectival space. Perspectival space is the revelation of the mythical mask, wherein the language of efficiency and consumption directly define an actively alienating space.

Diagram 1: Archival space

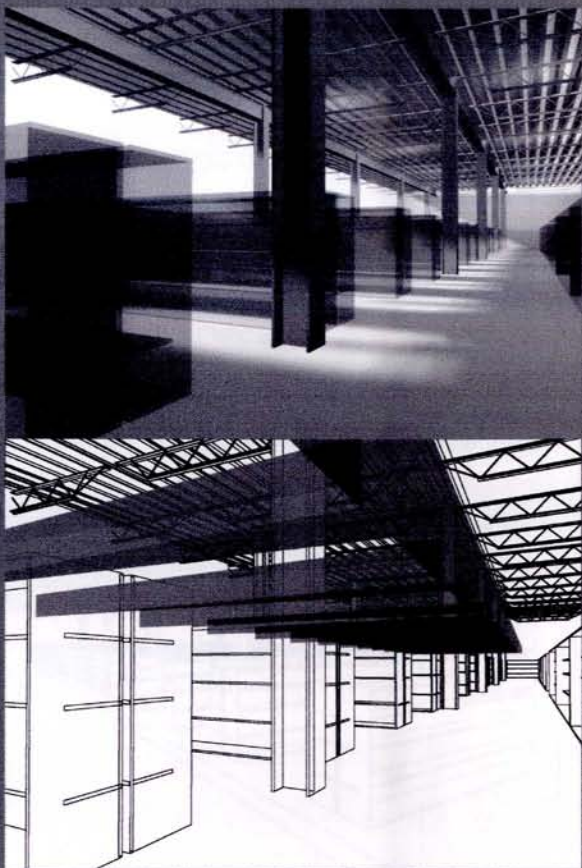
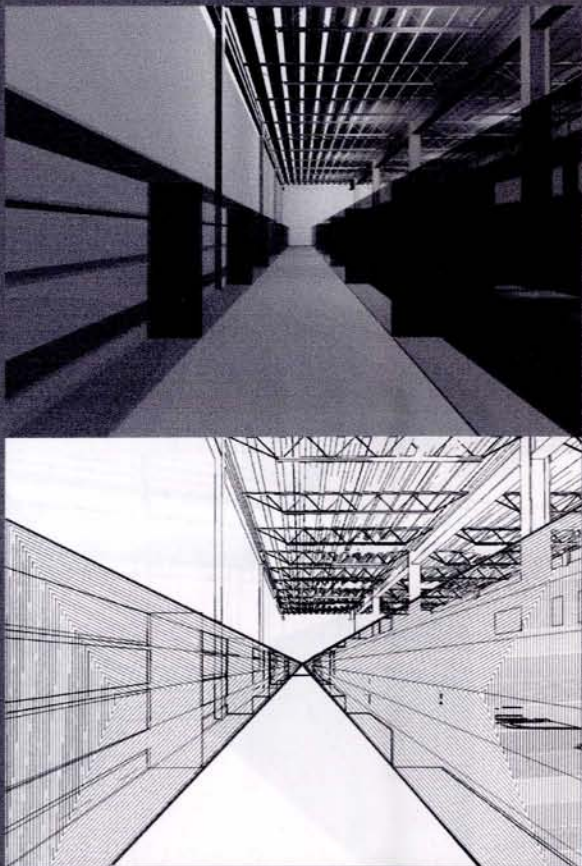


Diagram 2: Perspectival space





**DIAGRAM 3:** Perspectival space delimits the actions and views of the individual, but in the big box this is no more than the manifestation of cattle pen planning within the pancake space of the office workplace. The space of the big box can be characterized as *extensive space*, where through separation in scale and language from the body, the enclosure of the box seems to concurrently extend infinitely and disappear entirely. The scale and articulation of space within the big box in no way relates to the scale of the individual, and instead seems to be designed with the principle of complete disappearance beyond the level of the consumable item. Instead of being presenced, all the exposed structure and systems are painted white, the walls in the distant are white, white fluorescent tubes hang on white fixtures, disappearing as a homogenous sheet against which the signs and goods can show up all the better. And, for this very reason, the space seems to extend forever as all surfaces read as one another. Hermetically sealed against the external environment, but for the begrudging glass doors at the entrance, extensive space is the illusionary partner of the perspectival, extending the view forever more.

of the workplace lies in how it seeks to impact the worker often unattended with the study of consumption a disapproval of much workplace. What are these categories arise from of personal error individualistic, and what relationships, Rybczynski's environmental concerns are

**DIAGRAM 4:** The extensive space of the Wal-Mart is not scaled to the human body but rather, like a utilitarian warehouse, to the scale of the consumable item. This is evidenced by the compacted display of goods within this building, which regulate space according to a *consumable scale*. Consumable scale is not dictated in any real sense by the scale of the individual, except in the case that the goods are reachable or viewable by the individual. In many cases, such as wholesale and bulk type stores, even the concession to the reach of the individual is abandoned in lieu of an overriding consumable scale. In conjunction with the perspectival, these walls of consumption offer only the flat surface of packaging and display, without the reprieve of dimensionality provided in earlier models of consumption, such as the open market.

The lesson of the workplace environment, despite the worker's comfort it may provide, is spatial relationships.

Diagram 3: Extensive space

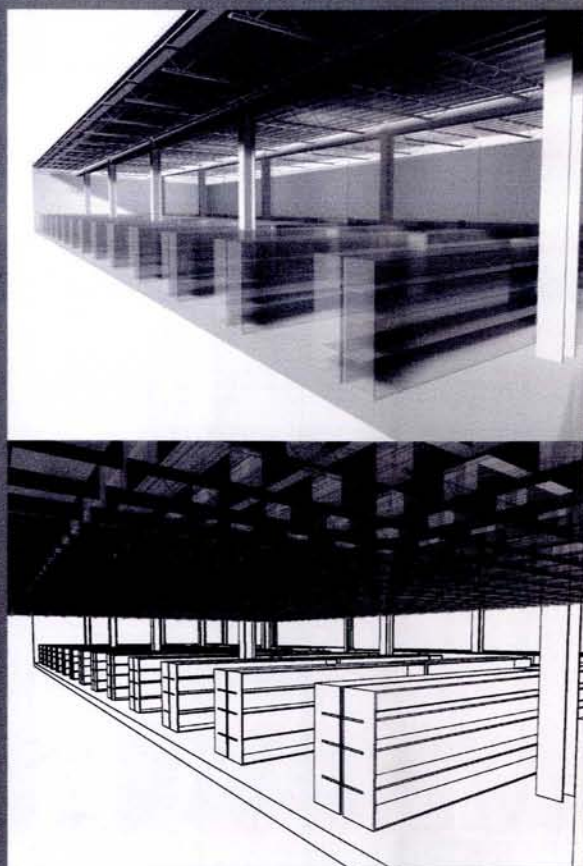


Diagram 4: Consumable scale





# CASE STUDIES 3:

## Mimetic Space

*The modern office interior reflects the scientific definition of comfort. Lighting levels have been carefully controlled to fall within an acceptable level for optimal reading convenience. The finishes of the walls and floors are restful; there are no garish or gaudy colors. Desks and chairs are planned to avoid fatigue.*

*But how comfortable do the people feel who work in such surroundings? (Rybczynski 1986: 226)*

The workplace of technological capitalism is a thoroughly analyzed and prescribed environment for efficient production. The entire science of ergonomics was developed for the increased comfort and efficiency of production of the employee. The result of this science of ergonomics is the creation of the 'optimized' work environment, the institution of mimetically reproduced spaces for production. The problem of the workplace lies in the fact that, though workspace design seeks to benefit the comfort of the employee, the individual is often unsatisfied with the work environment.

In a study of one large corporation, employees marked a disapproval of nearly two-thirds of the criteria of the workplace. What are these criteria? Essentially two categories arise, those of environmental concerns and those of personal comfort which have little to do with the physical environment, but rather seem to focus on spatial relationships. (Rybczynski 1986: 226-228) Within the realm of environmental concerns are issues of light and air circulation, temperature and background noise. The issues of personal comfort deal with more abstract issues, such as privacy and intimacy, qualities which are afforded by questions of enclosure, density of occupation, amounts of open space; in other words, those elements which define spatial relations. The problem of ergonomics is that no one solution can possibly encompass the difference of individual needs, for mimetic reproduction of even the most ideal workstation will produce an environment of stale mimesis.

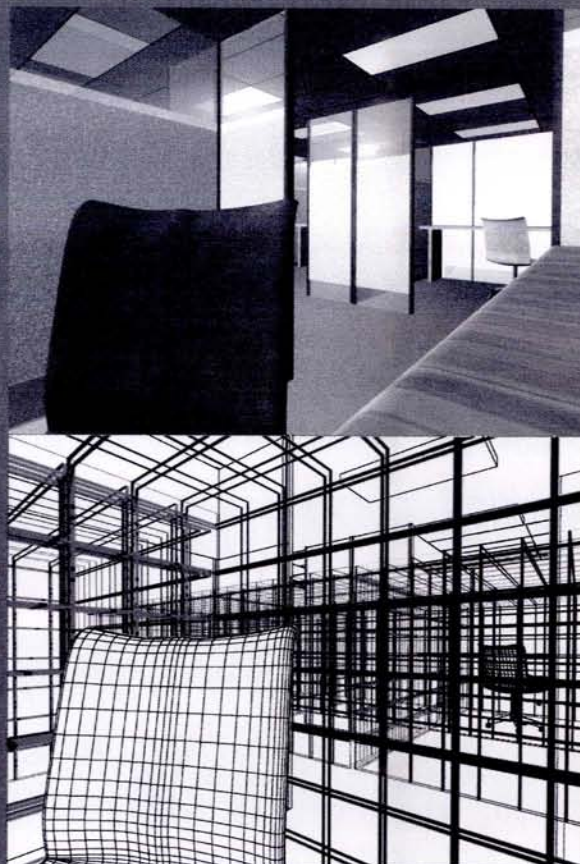
The workplace as mimesis reflects the forms of the mythical mask, wherein superficial environmental modifications do not address the fundamental issues of social and spatial relations. The science of ergonomics does not address the conditions which presuppose its necessity, why individuals feel uncomfortable and unproductive in their jobs. The lesson of the workplace indicates that cellular partitioning, despite the individual efficiency and modicum of comfort it may provide, cannot exchange for individuated spatial relationships.





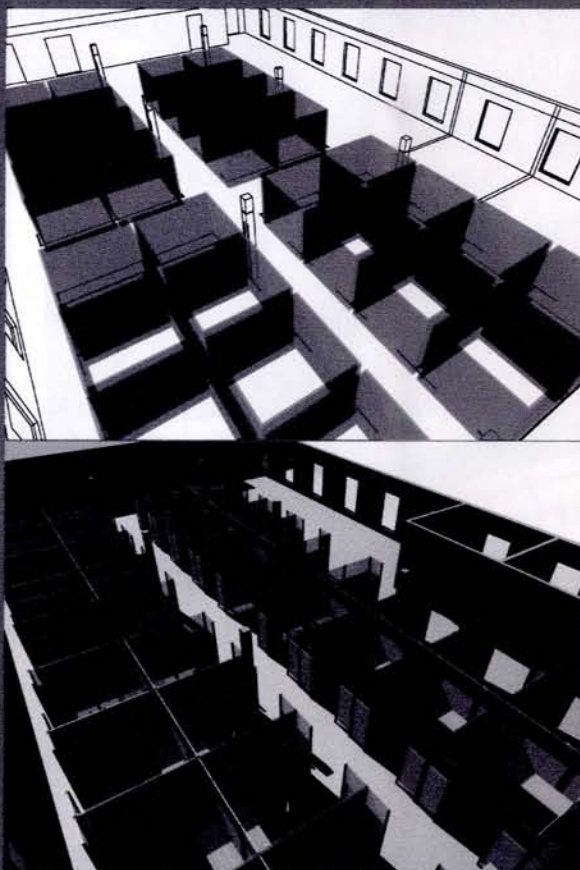
**DIAGRAM 1:** The design mode of workplaces in technological capitalism is the concession of worker comfort within the most economical use of the work area. With some probable exceptions, the concession to the worker is a benefit which will conversely benefit the employer, whether it be through greater loyalty, increased productivity or higher enthusiasm. There is no free lunch in a capitalist economy. The result of the concessions to the worker is to produce a sense of what can only be identified as *intimate alienation*. The design of the workplace focuses on two aspects, intimacy and segregation. The productivity of an individual increases when separated from the visual and audio distractions, and so the partitioning of space to reduce noise and visual distraction is a logical response. Within these spaces the applications of comfort are employed to further increase the body's contentment. The result, however, is of creating a condition of spatial isolation masked by a material atmosphere of comfort. A spatial recuperation of intimacy must replace the material in order for there to be any effective and non-alienating synthesis with spatial segregation as a recuperation of non-marginalizing workspace.

Diagram 1: Intimate alienation



**DIAGRAM 2:** The economy of technological capitalism is one marked by the phantoms of physical production that is replaced by the information service economy. Conducted from the computer terminal, the workplace itself is an ephemeral byproduct of information storage. Along with this sense of warehousing data in both printed form, and increasingly on the computer, exists the strict partitioning of space which can be identified as *cattlepen planning*. Within either an open office space, partitioned space, or completely enclosed offices, persons are arranged categorically and separately. The imposition of undifferentiated spaces by the primary criteria of efficiency of space planning is not only an alienating design for the individual, but actively degrades the body. While the necessity of economical uses of space are completely indispensable, and the very nature of immobilized desk-work alienating to the body, the geometrical and undifferentiated enforcement of segregation through cattle pen planning is a counterproductive means of space making.

Diagram 2: Cattlepen planning





**DIAGRAM 3:** Along with cattlepen planning, the homogenization of *pancake space* is one of the primary spatial alienations of the office workplace. Like mimetic warehousing, floor after floor of pancake space exists within the office building. Yet, with its gypsum board walls, windows which are not a gesture to the outside, but a decorative motif for the facade, and the relentless grid of acoustic ceiling panels, the pancake space is copied in buildings of one story to one-hundred, from the suburb to city center. This universal undifferentiated space is subject to the minimum height of comfort for the cross section generic individual, alienating all sense of individuality within the space. The spatial type of the mimetic is the complete marginalization of the individual. The pancake space is the first spatial system which must disappear in the recuperation of social relations.

**DIAGRAM 4:** The desire of privacy and intimacy for the individual is somewhat provided by the systems of partitioning within many workplaces, but this spatial system is a direct reflection of the mistrust the employer invest within the employee. The partition, while limiting noise and visual transparency, provides the opportunity for an *aural panopticon*, in which the worker can be held under surveillance from any other point within the pancake space of the office. This aural panopticon contradictorily serves to enable the wasting of time by somewhat concealing the individual from view, but also enabling the revelation of the act by being auditorially transparent and providing only partial enclosure. The partition system counteracts any benefits it may provide for the comfort of the individual in the possibility of constant exposure inherent in the system of the partition. The necessity for the monitoring of employees within the workplace is not something addressable through architectural means, but is rather a cultural issue, but a more subtle design of perhaps sectional modulations, as indicated through the other diagrams, would perhaps be a more successful solution.

Diagram 3: Pancake space

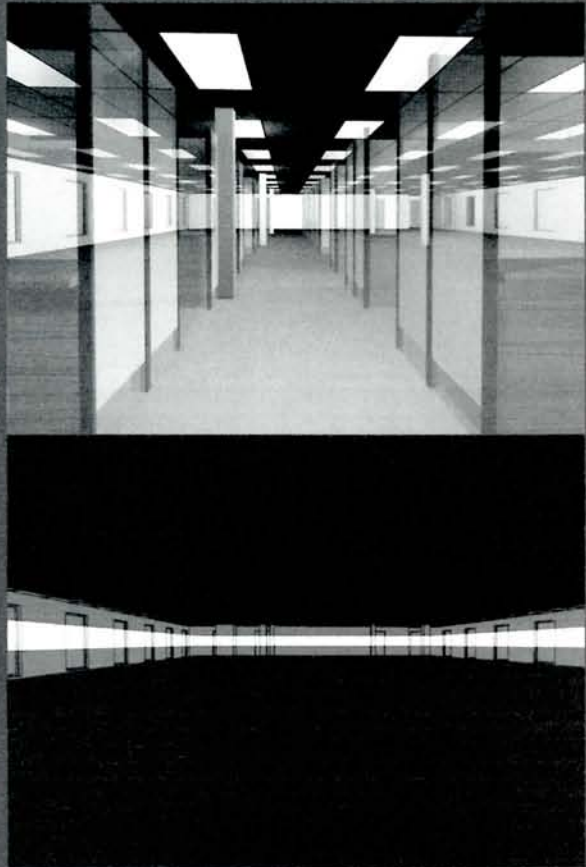
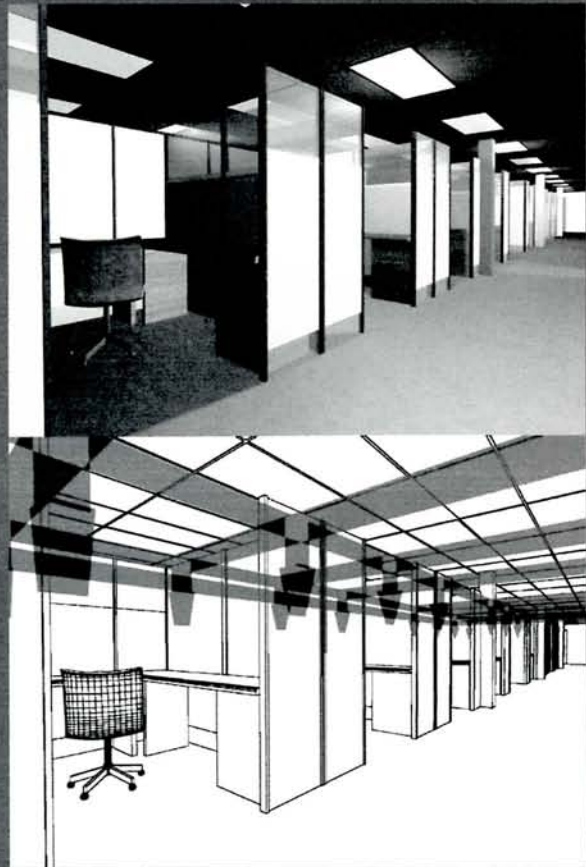


Diagram 4: Aural panopticon





# RECUPERATIONS

*It is not a matter of organizing visual perceptions, but of the general organization of human consciousness. The eye is an accurate mechanism which transmits the visual image to consciousness. The negative and positive nuances of assessment of visual perceptions depend upon the individual and social class experience of that consciousness. (Leonidov, rpt. In Khan-Magomedov 1983: 555)*

**Margin Architecture** and the **Case Studies** provide a basic explanation of the formulation of the mythical mask, and a critique of how these operations manifest themselves within the landscape of everyday architecture. Throughout this process, the possibility of a recuperation of social relations through spatial means has been forwarded, initially through a theoretical positioning, and secondly through the negative discourse of the case studies. Through the understanding gained in these exercises, a program for the recuperation of social relations can be posited.

The conditions for this recuperation cannot occur through a reinvestment in spaces such as those investigated in the case studies. An investigation in this direction would be an interesting study in the manipulation of the architectural forms of the mythical mask, however there can be no recuperation of social or spatial relations within this situation. The conditions of technological capitalism ensure the marginalization of the individual within the processes of production and consumption, and, despite any organizational and formal gerrymandering of these particular arenas, the nature of these places ensure the individual's alienation. Even the elimination of pancake space and cattlepen planning in the workplace cannot alleviate the alienation of an individual from the relations of labor; it can only serve to make him/her more comfortable and productive, but it never becomes home (see following discussion of the home and domesticity). Likewise, improving the spaces of consumption will not diminish the commodification and marginalization of the individual.

A recuperative program must function as an institution of civic or cultural or social relations which has minimal relations to the operations of technological capitalism. Under this designation a wide range of programs are applicable, however, many still fall under the guise of the mask, or within a liminal position between recuperative and mask. The more explicit the social program of an institution, the greater the possibility of recuperative spatial relations, as seen within churches or courthouses or museums. Yet, at the same time, the cultural attitude and role of the institutions must be analyzed; cannot a church be also an arena for the mythical mask, to socialize individuals into an acceptance of an alienating condition by promising a future utopia? For these reasons, the program chosen for a proposition of recuperation is a YMCA.

The YMCA, or Young Men's Christian Association, first appeared in the United States in the mid 19th century as 'manhood factories', or institutions for the socialization of young men into Christianity and urban life. (Mjagkij 1997: 5) Established by an urban commercial elite, the focus of the YMCA was to instill in the young man the values of Christian



YMCA We build strong kids, strong families, strong communities





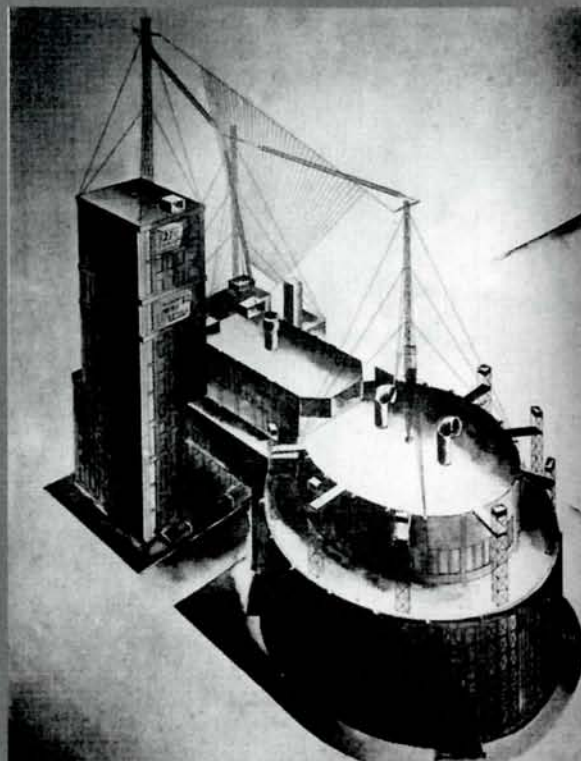
capitalists, therefore creating a content and pacified workforce. In short order a YWCA was similarly established to facilitate this development in the female population. The motto of the YMCA is *spirit, mind, body*, but from the beginning, the success of the institution as a Christian enterprise was overshadowed by its role as a site for social interaction and physical development. As the organization moved through the twentieth century the emphasis began to shift away from evangelical attempts at Christian conversion towards issues of inclusivity and social reform. Through recent years the social program has been superceded by emphasis on the body and individual health. The result is that at the turn of the twenty first century the YMCA is a social institution which provides services and spaces for both individual and social recuperations that can be created through spatial relationships. (See appendix for programming and activities within facility.)

Recuperations are based not solely on programmatic assertions, but also on models of socially recombinatory architecture and organizations. Each of these precedents possess the potential for recuperative space, but also the latent trace of the mask. First is an investigation of Soviet architecture, and the attempt to create a language for socialist architecture. Secondly is a look at the modernist social utopian propositions of Archigram and the radical social spaces proposed by Lebbeus Woods. Finally, the conditions of domesticity, comfort and the creation of 'home' will be explored in the single family house and its deconstruction by Frank Gehry in his own house. Combined with the principles defined in the case studies, the basis for recuperation can be established.

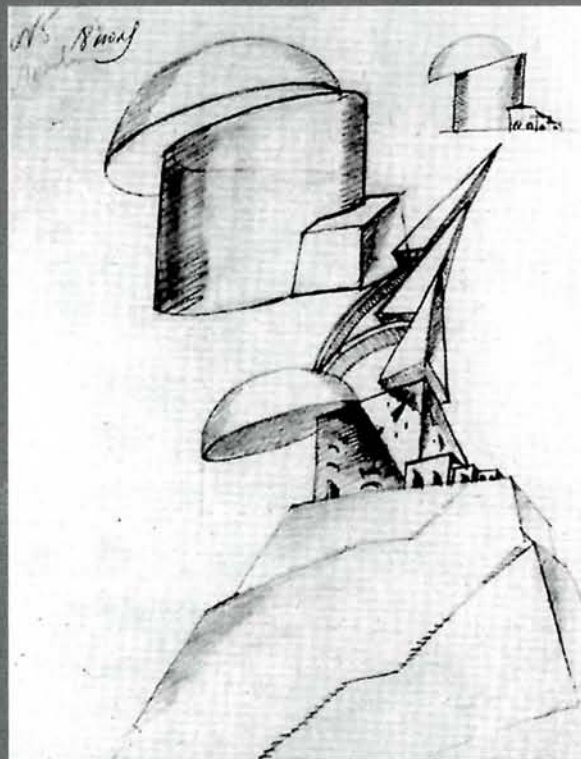
## REVOLUTIONARY ARCHITECTURE

Following the Worker's Revolution of 1917, Soviet architects faced the daunting task of creating a socialist architecture that not only represented the structure of the society, but also actively participated in the shaping of this society. The enactment of new types of dwelling and social patterns could only occur through the organizational and formal inventions of a new architecture. The revolutionary social structures could only be embodied in an aesthetic that was a complete break from the forms of the former bourgeois society. The socialist "attitude to the use of buildings now no longer treated as merchandise for the procurement of profit" (Khan-Magomedev 1983: 13) meant that all buildings were now conceived of as arenas of social and spatial relations. The very basis for all of culture at this instant was the recuperation of social space from an industrial capitalist society based on production and consumption.

The forms of architecture that existed prior to the revolution assume associations with the dethroned classes of exploiters. The search for a new form and expressions of space, organization and language initiated many radical propositions within the burgeoning society. In time, two major progressive architectural systems emerged from this culture: Constructivism and Rationalism. Constructivism is the more widely known of these two disciplines, popularly identified as *the style* of Soviet architecture following the revolution. Headed by architects and designers such as Alexander Vesnin, Lissitzky and Leonidov, Constructivist architecture proposed a new design method for



Vesnin brothers, competition for the Palace of Labour, Moscow 1922-1923.



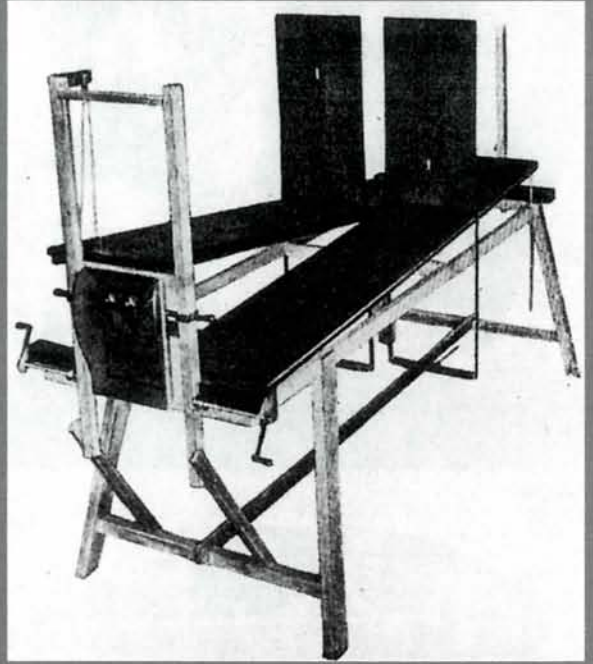
Ladovsky, experimental designs, 1919.



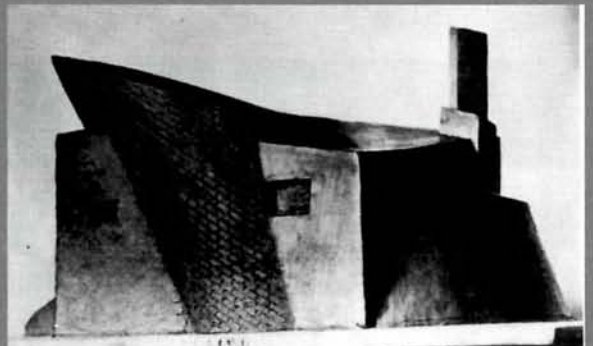
the creation of form, based on structural elements, materials and construction. While the architecture of Constructivism came to be a major force in the definition of modern architecture, it is its Soviet cousin Rationalism that holds a greater potential for the concept of an architecture of social and spatial recuperation.

Rationalism actually preceded the development of Constructivism, with its first formulations coming at the hands of Nikolai Ladovsky in the late 1910's, and developed within organizations such as Asnova and ARU. Rationalism was established as a break from inherited notions of composition, and the central issue of importance for Ladovsky was the issue of space and its perception by the individual. The creation of a revolutionary architectural language proceeded from the concept of "form, not as the mere outcome of functional and purely utilitarian structural considerations, but as the product of much less transitory human inspirations and perceptions in, for instance, the realm of space." (Khan-Magomedev 1983: 536) The creation of architecture according to this discipline began first with space, then form and finally construction, a basic inversion of the methods of the Constructivists. The term Rationalist is derived from the psychological methods of investigation into spatial forms, whereby the effect of spatial organization on the individual was tested, through a variety of machines and models, analyzing effects of light, material, surface and other factors on human perception. The spatial solutions, rationally arrived at through this analytical method, were not purely functional spaces, but tended also towards the creation of an image. The image of form for the Rationalists becomes a synthesis of spatial freedom and logic, rather than space and form as a problem of aesthetics, as in much of modern architecture.

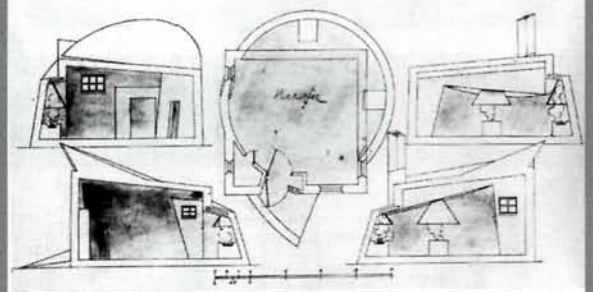
Soviet architecture, in both program and theory, epitomizes a recuperation of spatial and social relations. The programmatic inventions of the Soviets were great condensers of social activities, and simultaneously monumental structures. The creation of Palaces for Soviets, Workers and the like created complex social institutions which combined recreation, leisure and edification, almost always dominated by large communal assembly halls. The concept of diverse social programming is essential to the concept of the YMCA, but the concept of monumentality is countermanding to the recuperation of the individual, and therefore must be eliminated as a design concept. The desire for working within everyday social relations precludes the possibility or desire for a revolutionary architecture in which the forms and materials of everyday life are abandoned. This cannot produce a useful model for everyday building, because it cannot possibly be economically viable, and thus an architecture of exceptionality. What is necessary, is to conceive of new spatial forms and systems of organization utilizing the language of everyday architecture. Rationalist architecture provides the precedent for the systemic investigation of spatial assemblages and the impact on the individual psyche, as well as the concepts fusing form as function and image. The freedom and logic of spatial organization in Rationalism, coupled with the search for a symbolic language irreferential of past forms, and the identification of architecture as the site of social relations, provides the ultimate model for a recuperative everyday architecture.



Prostometer, a device used in Ladovsky's Psycho-Technical Research Laboratory.



Viktor Petrov. Forge with double hearth: Ladovsky's course, Vkhutemas, 1921.



Melnikov, Rusakov Club 1927-1928.

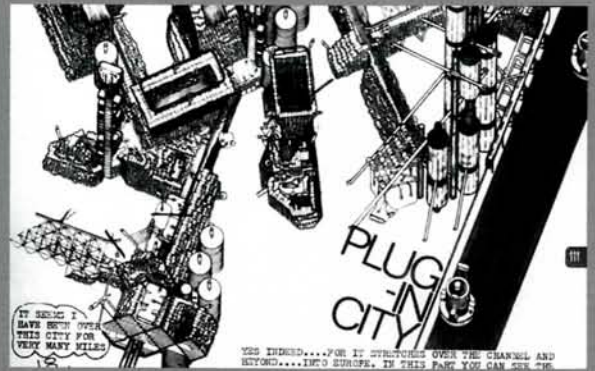


## UTOPIAN / RECOMBINATIVE ARCHITECTURE

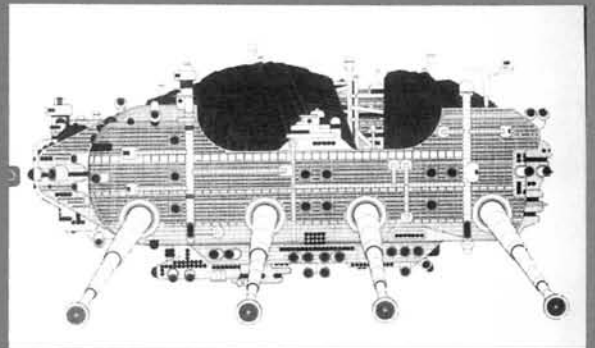
Architecture is a utopian practice, in that it attempts to create the most perfect environment possible for individuals. Oftentimes, this is an unconscious act that follows as a result of the architectural design education. Many architects, however, intentionally propose utopian solutions. Beginning with prehistoric religious temples that represented the perfection of the holy, through geometrically perfect city plans of the Renaissance, to Modernist utopias of social organization; architecture is festooned with the proposal of utopia. Perhaps the last of the great utopian groups, Archigram, provides a point of departure for a recombinative architecture that begins to recuperate social relations within the existing social milieu, which Lebbeus Woods then radically re-proposes.

The group Archigram was one of many influential avant-garde architectural groups during the 1960s that actively proposed utopian systems of architecture and urbanity. The group felt that by reflecting and magnifying the trends of contemporary culture that they could liberate individuals "from the restrictions imposed on them by the existing chaotic situation, in the home, at work and in the total built environment." (Cook 1972: 16) The situation of the environment, the activities and happenings within them, is more important than the built demarcation of space. In this regard the group is utopian, for they intend the very design of society and social relations. The group placed full faith within the capacity of technology to transform society, which is in hindsight quite absurd, but at the time seemed to be an optimistic projection of current trends in the culture. They felt that within "a technological society more people will play an active part in determining their own individual environment." (Cook 1972: 17) Technology enables the restructuring of society at the macro level as well, as in the Plug-In City, where components would be replaced as they became obsolete, the Walking City, where the entire metropolis became a mobile entity, and the Living City, that "takes the form of a complete structure, an organism designed to condition the spectator by cutting him off from the everyday situation, where things are seen in predictable and acceptable manners." (Cook 1972: 20)

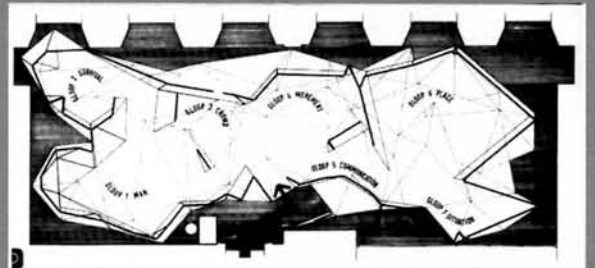
The concepts of Archigram resonate with the desire for a recuperative architecture that empowers the individual by exposing them to an environment in which they have complete control of their everyday life. Move the city and modify the house all in one afternoon. There seems though, to be a flaw amongst all this technological utopianism. The project Living 1990 proposed that architecture would become a mere container for technology; robot partitions, hoverchairs, floors modulated by individual preference that seems far less about architecture than imaginative gadgetry. Space is condensed into a single volume altered by technology, replacing architecture with complicated furniture; building is reduced to the role of carcass. Archigram cannot hope to achieve its reconstructive goals because it operates as an extension of the dominant culture. Instead of revelatory design, Archigram perpetuates the dialogues of the mythical mask. The trend towards disposable items leads Archigram to promote the concept of obsolescence within architecture, but this serves only to reproduce the systems of expanding consumption imposed by technological



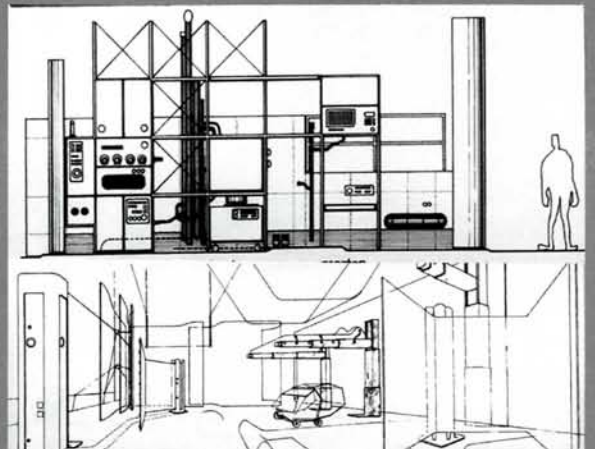
Archigram, Plug-in City, 1964



Archigram, Walking City, 1964



Archigram, Living City, 1962



Archigram, Living 1990, 1967.

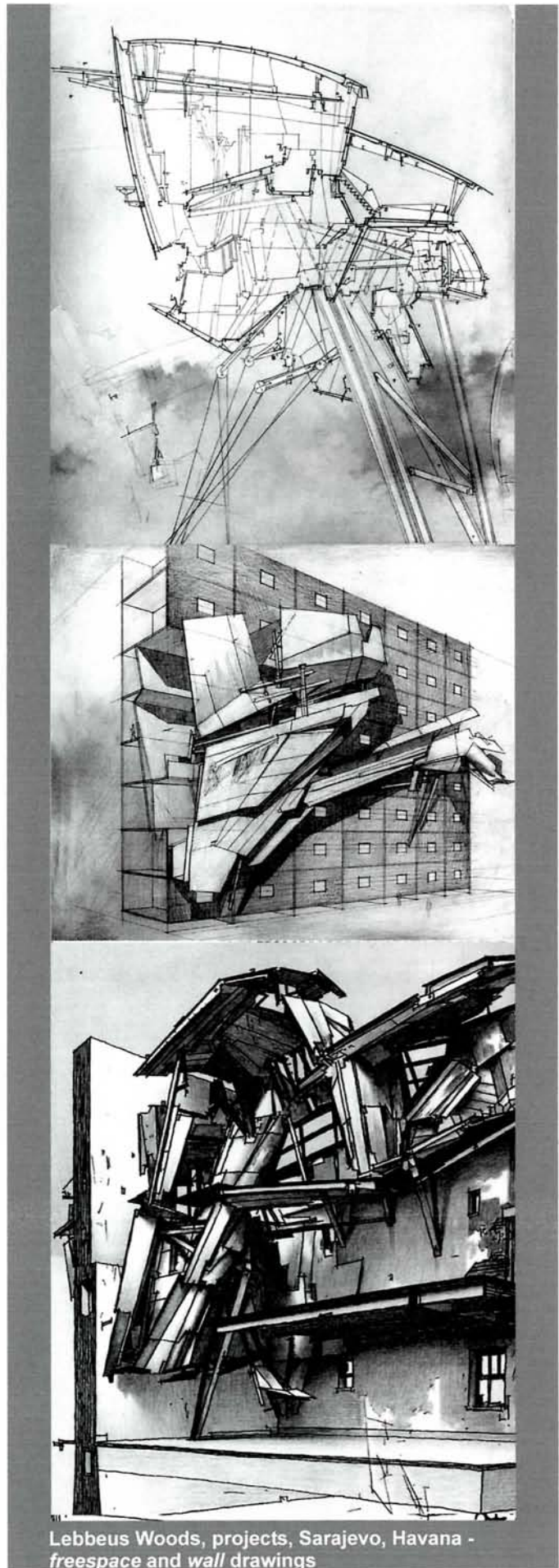


capitalism. Archigram fails, despite all intentions, because from the first act the group is embedded within the mythical mask, and can therefore only perpetuate its marginalizing systems.

An architecture of recombination is an alternative to the utopian. Conscious of the limits of social production within a marginalizing society, a recombinative architecture produces space as a critique of the dominant systems of power. This is the method through which Lebbeus Woods theorizes and represents architectural space making. Woods recognizes the marginalized condition of society, that the systems of technological capitalism disguise the reality of social relation. This disguise controls individuals through pleasure rather than pain; "some essential realities (are) masked by what has been referred to as the 'self-satisfaction' of mass culture." (Woods 1997: 13) It becomes possible to expose alienation within by questioning the nature of the identity individuals allow to be imposed upon them. In technological capitalism "the financial convenience of commercially viable reproduction impoverishes our conceptual abilities," creating passivity towards the condition of the society. The architect labors to create space, but these spaces are abstract entities which do not fit human needs, but rather human needs are shaped to fit designed space. Woods contends that the architect continues marginalization by labeling abstract, meaningless space with 'function' without ever questioning that function, as provided in the example of the 'lecture hall':

*The justification of suppression of violators is clear enough. Social order must be maintained so that individual freedom (which is largely the freedom to conform to social norms) can be maintained. Think of the poor lecturer, who no doubt has something important to say, interrupted by the spontaneous singer, the too-long questioner who is usurping the lecturer's role, or the thinker whose heretical views upset the carefully controlled balance of the lecture and the listening. If, or so the argument goes, the "function of space" is violated, and this violation is tolerated, it may set a precedent, become more widespread, threaten the whole mechanism of society. Anarchy. Chaos. It cannot be allowed. (Woods 1997: 23)*

Woods challenges the hierarchies of architectural production and ordering along zones of contention, where the mask over society begins to peel away and leave an indeterminate social structure. He proposes a radical spatial organization that produces new social relationships and methods of occupation of empty, meaningless spaces, which cannot enforce any social program because they are deliberately created devoid of program. This is an architecture that challenges social relations because it forces the occupants to create the meaning of the spaces, rather than conform to labeled abstract space. The spatial methodology can be divided into the concepts of *walls* and *freespaces*. *Walls* are not necessarily physical boundaries, but rather are organizational zones between and within spaces of conflict between the dominant and recuperative. *Freespaces* are those places in which the individual confronts the void of meaning, the loss of familiarity with architectural and cultural norms where there is no enforcement of the mythical mask. "These landscapes may seem startling, even irrational, but they are



Lebbeus Woods, projects, Sarajevo, Havana -  
freespace and wall drawings



nothing if not extensions of reason." (Woods 1997: 15)

Where the proposition of an architecture for the marginalized within everyday experience differs from Woods' position is that he assumes a radical abandonment of the conditions of everyday alienation in technological capitalism. Assuming extreme sites, and abandoning the concepts of private property and the division of labor/dependency (the technological separation of power), Woods cannot fall farther from the realm of the everyday. Yet, his critique of recombination embodies the element missing in the utopic schemes of Archigram; the possibility to move beyond the social structures of technological capitalism in order to critique these structures. This, plus the concepts of walls and freespaces, informs a possible architectural critique within the everyday which can fuse the structure of lived experience of the individual with an indeterminacy of space and function.

## DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE

Initially, the case studies were to include a fourth example, which was to be a single family, detached suburban residence. The realm of the suburban house is a highly imagined space, where the artificiality of the simulacrum is so much stronger than reality that one concedes this landscape to its image. From *The Brady Bunch* to *Growing Pains*, media representations of the single family have provided the popular, if not lived, conception of the home environment; it is the dream of the center of a happy modern life. It seemed that the detached home, as the genesis and descriptor of the suburbs, would fit within the realm of the mythical mask, along with the workplace, Wal-Mart and mall. The investigation of the home revealed that the occupation of space, which I will define as domesticity, mediates the schism between imagination and reality, producing an inclusive space and possible model for a recuperative architecture.

The suburban home is a site of conflict within the realm of the everyday, embodying both the conformist exclusionary and liberating inclusionary. The exterior of the house conforms to the notion of public life, therefore marginalizing the individual, while the interior exists in a state of relative freedom. The language of the lawn and the facades delineate the exterior of the suburban house. The lawn mediates between the public and interior familial domesticity. It is the common denominator unifying the private property into a perceived unity of ownership, reinforcing the myth of idyll and repose within the suburb. Fishman identifies that it is the image of the "aristocratic country house" that provides the "implication that the land around a suburban house is not simply pretty space, but the sign of superior social and economic status." (1987: 46) To preserve this illusion of status, each individual property must conform to community standards, to conform to these aesthetic standards ensures that the individual body will also conform to the ethics and values implied by the community. "The association between the well-maintained lawn and the well-maintained family is reinforced in all forms of advertisement for suburban life... The whole point of lawn care is that you do not have to display the family. Rather, you display the lawn itself as surrogate or certificate of your adherence to social norms." (Wigley 1999: 156) The exterior of the home extends the conformity, and thus



Kitchen into dining room.



Family room



exclusion, of the lawn, following guidelines of style, color, setback from the street, etc. The facade of the everyday suburban house acts as a mask to the activities and lives of the inhabitants while simultaneously projecting the image of normalcy.

The interior of the house is an immediate denial of the exterior, for the interior is the realm of domesticity. Domesticity is derived from the Latin *domus* for home, and refers to the internal workings of home life. This word, however, has the potential to command a recuperative architecture by signifying the occupation of space in everyday life. The occupation of space by the body is a relation of power, the ability for the body to control the space and alter the space to individual needs. The model of the interior of a conceptually idealized house is shown in various views in a state of dress and undress, occupation and desertion. The unoccupied space gives no hint of how the space is either to be occupied, nor gives any indication of domesticity, other than the fact that the spaces have been abstractly labeled for the function of specific domestic labors: kitchen for fixing food, bedroom for sleeping, etc. It is through the alteration of space by human occupation that domesticity occurs, as the other images prove. Now function is explicit, but only because of some individual enforcement of the space, the family room can just as easily but utilized as a bedroom, the bedroom as a library. This can be reaffirmed when an abstract space, which was originally utilized as warehouse, is converted into a "house" through the occupation of an individual. If, then, through the occupation of any space one can arrive at domesticity, then an opposite formulation can be proposed, which is that domesticity can be utilized as a model for the creation of any space. An architecture can be proposed then, where the model of the house is converted into any other use of space, and the domestic becomes the formula for the recuperation of social and spatial relations.

The concept of domesticity in the house is at present confined within the cocoon of alienation that is its external representation. In order for the domestic to extend beyond its present interior confinement, a model for a critical manipulation of the interior domesticity throughout the architectural project must be sought. The example of Frank Gehry's own house provides a possible solution to this problem. The Gehry House began as the alteration of an everyday home in an everyday suburban neighborhood, and by the conclusion of the design process came to question all the suppositions of the everyday. As in other earlier projects such as the Davis House and Spiller House, Gehry utilizes the structure and construction of the existing house to dislocate the experience of everyday living; disemboweling the structure, peeling off conventional layerings of plaster and wallboard, the space of the house is radically altered, but remains recognizably everyday. Gehry goes on to transcend the schism between the interior and exterior through this use of construction language, which seems ultimately external, as it pierces through the existing structure and begins to create another skin beyond the original. The old house is partially encased in a new wrapper of rough materials, creating zones of internal space along those surfaces that were previously external. Using prosaic materials such as chain link fence, corrugated metal and asphalt in unexpected situations, the body is shocked and forced to question the nature of the space and their place within it. This disassembly and transformation of everyday forms, creates wholly unforeseen



Dining room into family room



Gehry house, front elevation



relationships, it is a spatial investigation paralleling the work of the Rationalists, and humanely satisfies Lebbeus' Woods call for radical conceptions of occupation beyond the abstraction of the everyday. With the concept of spatially altered domesticity, it is now possible to create a recuperative architecture.



Gehry house, window onto garden



Gehry house, interior of kitchen.



# Organizational Protocols: Site Investigations

*Almost everything in America is suburbia; suburbia is a distributive protocol, a code of procedures that shapes exurban development into more uniform networks of organization... Their dominant architecture may be best described by the constraints governing timing, organization, and interactivity within their environment. (Easterling 1997: 22)*

In order to critique the social relations of everyday spaces one must identify where in the environment the most quotidian conditions exist, and to take action at that point. Within the realm of technological capitalism, where the individual and the environment become series of coded information, traditional urbano-centric models become irrelevant. The obsolescence of the city is the result of the forms of economy and communication that alleviate the need for condensed human relations. The capacity for complete dissemination of information throughout the environment allows for the dissolution of the centralized city form and the predominance of the exurban technoburb. For the majority of the population, the 'city' ceases to embody the role of the everyday and instead corresponds to a condition of the extraordinary. It is only by siting the project within the exurban condition, the heart of the culture of the mythical mask, that a model for the recuperation of everyday social relations can be forwarded.

Columbus, Ohio, can be typified as a city that embodies American urban developments over the last one hundred years. Established for the sole purpose of being a state capitol in the mid 1850's, the city was developed because of neither beneficial geological features, nor industrial advantages. Rather, the city was sited according to its relative geographic centrality within the state, i.e., Columbus was established according to organizational protocols. Accordingly, the structure of the city has closely mimicked the organizational strategies of capitalist development. Today, with a population of over 1.2 million persons, the metropolitan area is a bizarre pastiche of urban, suburban and rural fabrics. This is the landscape left by the decay of the concept of the urban, by the replacement of monumental forms by an eclectic, obsolescent landscape. Many critics find this type of landscape to be highly anarchical, fragmented and meaningless. Instead, let us think of this 'fragmented' landscape as the possibility of heterarchical ordering as the neglected brother of the hierarchical system. Instead of one centralized node, around which everything is organized, or even multiple nodes that are related to each other in a hierarchical manner, this mélange of spatial types is the complete lack of specificity, which enables every node to freely interact with any other node. Mimicking the repetitive architecture of the everyday, one exurban node is essentially the same as any other node, an organizational mode that is potentially recuperative. The systems of the heterarchy symbolize the liberation of



*Columbus, Ohio - site area marked,  
Crowne Pointe Center, Bethel Road*

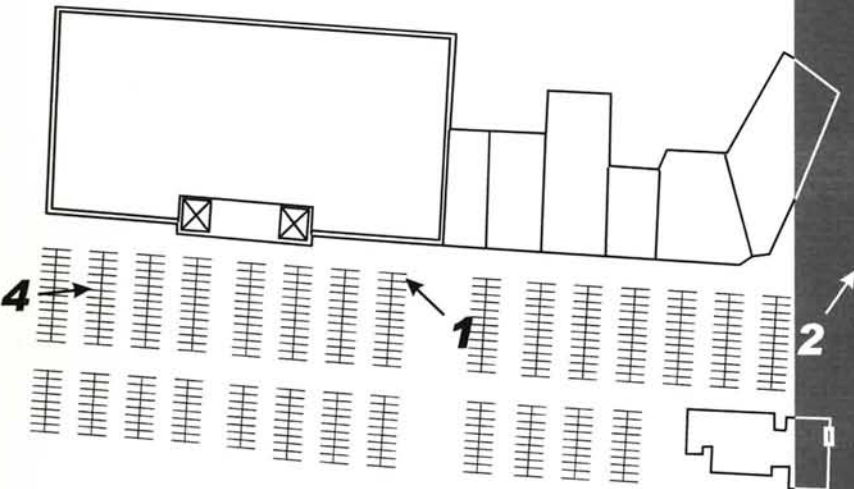




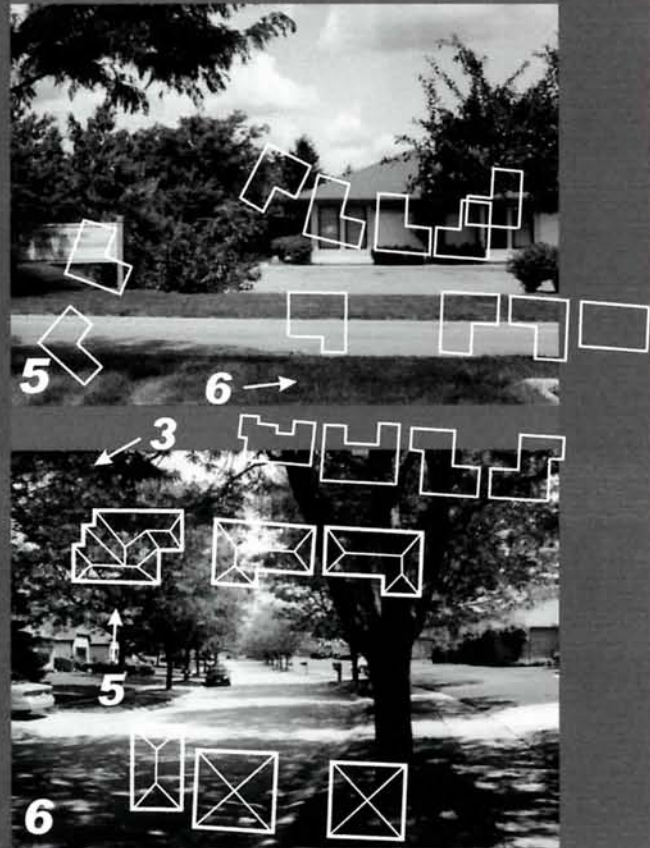
dependency upon traditional urban structures, but not yet the liberation of the marginalized.

Each of the nodes of the heterarchy are condensations of traditional urban and rural forms, which serve to continue the work of the mythical mask. The node I have selected for this exercise is the Crowne Pointe Center where the proposed YMCA will replace the Crowne Pointe Office Park. This node contains all the elements necessary for life: residential, commercial, workplace. Feasibly, a resident here would never have leave the area to fulfill the necessities of everyday life, but of course just as others come to this node, so to do persons leave to go to others. Life within this node, however, differs from traditional forms of civic life, in that the systems of organization create a sense of complete a-communality. This is structurally reinforced by the physical segregation of the site, which is accomplished through the use and provision of transportation. Within purely residential sectors there is occasionally a provision for pedestrians, between development areas there is often none, which discourages personal human contact. Rather, individuals utilize the automobile as the device through which inter- and intra-nodal contact is conducted. Extensive literature exists describing the condition and experience of pedestrian and driver, but it need only be said for the purposes of argument at present that the automobile predominates within this landscape. The resulting organization within the landscape is that streets create links between nodes, but division within the node. The street becomes a metaphorical wall, which, when traveled along allows the traveler control over the landscape, but once left divides the landscape, an invisible partition which segregates islands of activity that is largely inaccessible due to the lack of pedestrian-ways. Coupled with the previously discussed alienation imposed by the structure of the lawn and building exteriors, the physical environment of the node alienates individuals.

More significant than the physical implications of the node on social relations is the impact of the mythical mask that silently alienates the individual. Suzanne Stephens commented "people long for a symbolic environment laden with associations, connotations and



**Crowne Point center - photos**





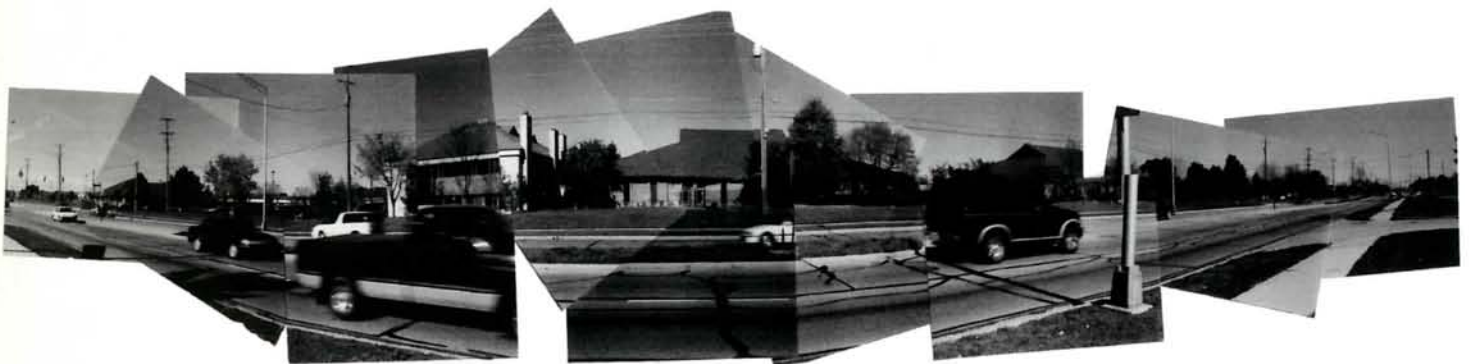
Content to express their self-images, fantasies and lifestyles. And they don't give a damn about the degree of sham they go to to get it." (Fausch 1997: 86) Individuals not only accept the myths of technological capitalism, but even embrace them for their own self-definition, which is sadly understandable due to the lack of other significant models, or even critiques of the system. The myths of the environment effect how we perceive and interact in our daily lives: "I move through the city in a particular manner because I have constructed a particular psychical reality made of distinctions, or powerful fantasies of distinctions, based on, not rational intentions or cognitions, but rationalizations of unconscious desires." (Epstein 1997: 134) These 'unconscious desires' shape our everyday physical response to the environment, fears of harm and the other keeping individuals away from certain places they deem 'unsafe', justified only by myth and imagination. Images of the lawn, family, arcadia and domesticity dominate the exurban realm; whether or not these images are justified is not of importance. The stifling homogeneity of the image is necessary to maintain the myth, by not allowing dissension within the exurban fabric the appearance of the image remains intact. The smothering of dissenting imagery is achieved because "exclusions enacted to homogenize public space by expelling specific differences are dismissed as deeds necessary to (maintain) social harmony." (Deutsche 1991: 166) The forcible conformation within the exurb of technological capitalism is the primary mode of enforcement of the myth and alienation of individuals. However, by consciously critiquing the forms and imagery of this landscape, the potentially liberating systems of the heterarchy can be engaged, forging a recuperation of social relations of the marginalized.



*Where the sidewalk ends.*



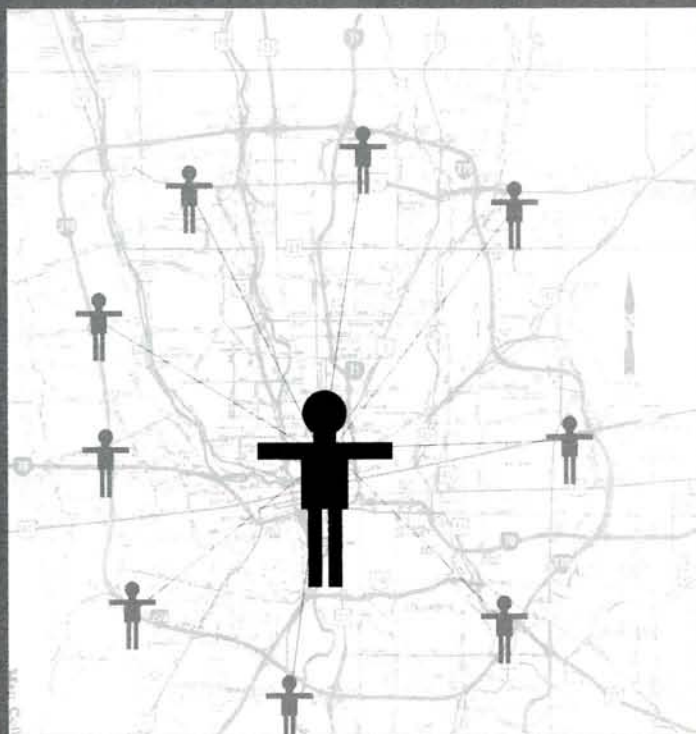
*Where the sidewalk isn't.*



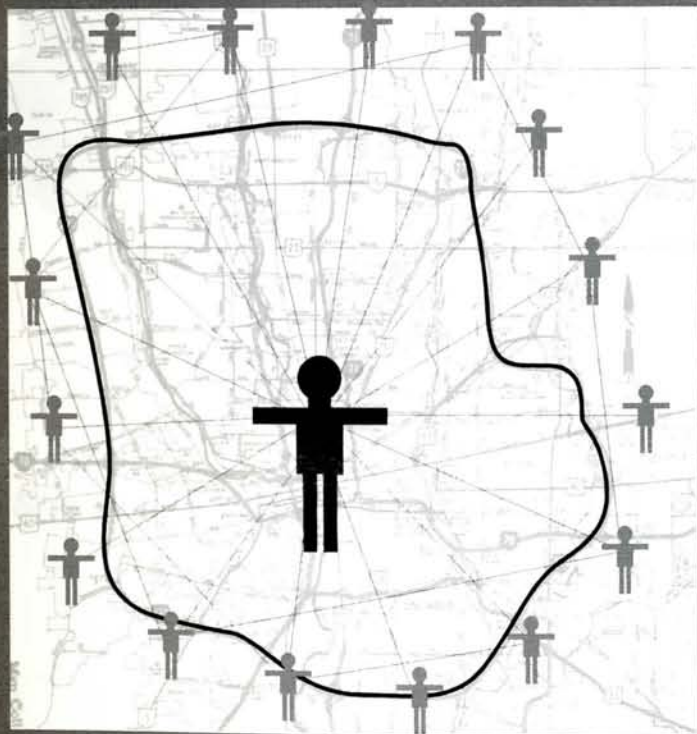
*Panoramic view of site from across Bethel Road.*



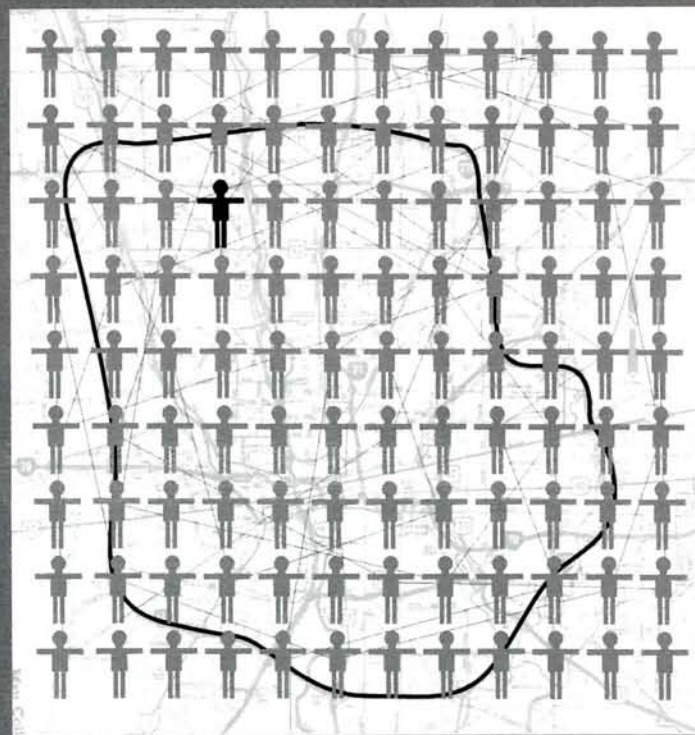
## **Site Diagram 1:** **Hierarchy to heterarchy**



*Traditional hierarchical urban center/ suburban relationship, which strengthens urban system.*



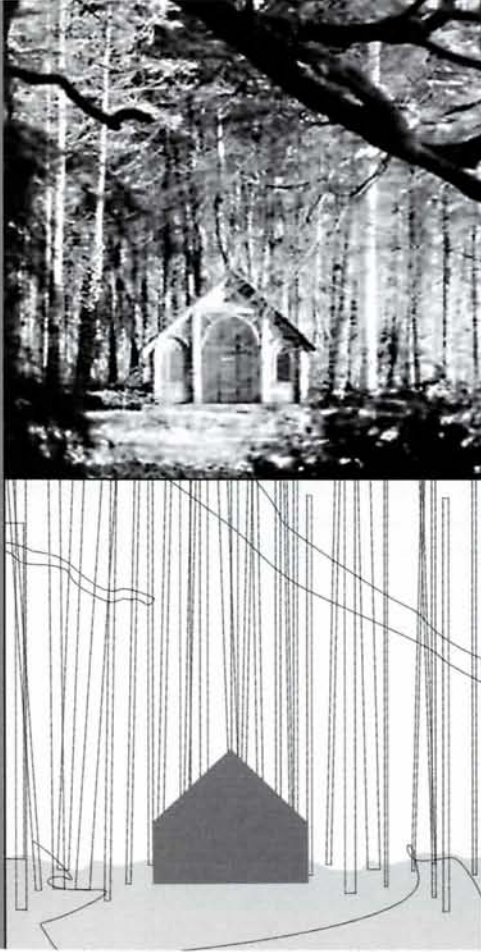
*Fractured hierarchical relationship where multiple nodes compete with the traditional urban center/ suburban relationship.*



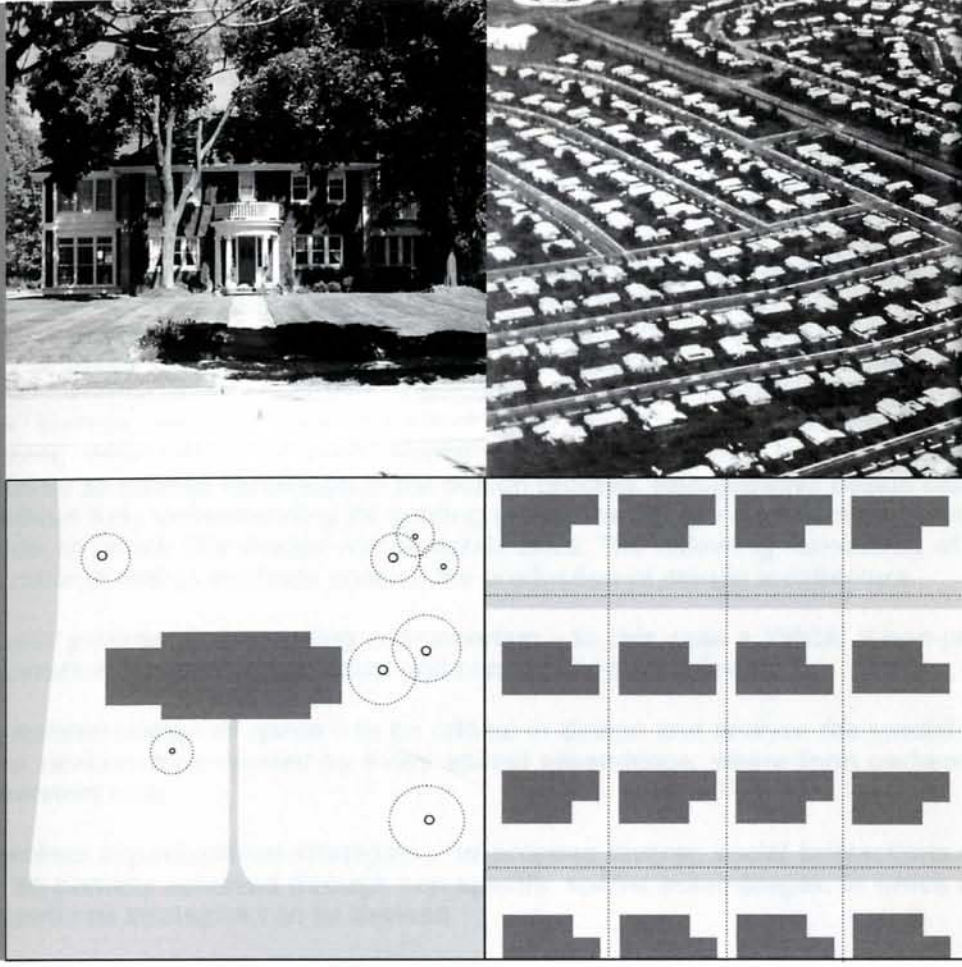
*Heterarchical system, in which there is no center or preferential structural relationship between nodes.*



*Myth of the arcadia*



*Myth of the aristocratic manor*



*Site Diagram 4: Imag(in)ed spaces*



# MARGIN ARCHITECTURE

Margin architecture is the bandage that mediates between the alienating environment and the recuperation of socio-spatial relations. This is a revelatory architecture that critiques the marginalization of technological capitalism and creates a space for the recuperation of these relations. A design of this sort is revolutionary in the sense that, with the foreknowledge of the conditions of alienation, it must consider the implications of every space, surface, material, view and effect upon the individual. It is impossible to anticipate form, organization or even spatial needs for program; this can only be accomplished by an intense immersion in the design process. Recuperative design cannot be begun without fully understanding its guiding principles. *Margin Architecture* provides the foundation on which this design will be established. The following summation of the established rational design methods enables the production of margin architecture.

*A social program transcending consumerism* – in this case a YMCA, a non-profit organization focused on individual and community development.

*The rational design of space* – to be critical in design and analyze the spatial and social relationships created by every spatial assemblage, where form performs a subservient role.

*Conscious organizational strategies* – to propose diverse social interactions that may be partially achieved through non-specific spatial assemblages, in which new occupational strategies can be devised.

*Embracing the heterarchy* –to avoid hierarchical systems of ordering, which inherently are disproportionate relationships of power, both on the site and within the building. This includes devices such as monumentality, symmetry and centrality.

*Assuming the everyday* – to produce a recuperative architecture that utilizes the materials and construction of everyday vernacular architecture, which will be both symbolic and critical of the everyday. By working in this method, the possibility for this architecture to be replicated throughout the heterarchical landscape is both economically and technically feasible, and immediately implementable at a mass scale.

*Achieving domesticity* – to create an architecture in which the body is truly able to occupy its environment, through direct manipulation and other systems of relationships.

*Denying marginalization* – by remembering the alienations of *pancake space*, *consumable scale*, *dispersive space*, and all other forms of alienation present within current everyday architecture, to create their recombinatory antithesis, to provide an architecture that can revolutionize everyday social reality.



## Appendix 1: Programming

The program for a YMCA consists of multiple spaces, some which are specifically programmed such as swimming pools and racquetball courts, and others which are open to multiple uses and organizations, such as meeting halls and gymnasiums. This complex program of social spaces can be divided into arenas of individual spaces, collective spaces, and spaces which house both the collective social space and the individual. Provided is a list of general space requirements for the facility, based on conventions of programmatic definition of abstract spaces. The process of design development may find that spatial and programmatic definition digress into an anarchic situation, all of which will be determined within the design.

### COLLECTIVE:

8 lane Olympic swimming pool	15200s.f.
Instructional swimming pool	7000s.f.
Gymnasium - 3 Basketball courts	16600s.f.
Gymnastics and activities gymnasium	5400s.f.
Meeting hall - large	2400s.f.
Meeting hall - medium (2)	2 x 1000s.f.
Daycare facilities	1000s.f.
Lobby/foyer	600s.f.
Teen center/gameroom	800s.f.

### INDIVIDUAL:

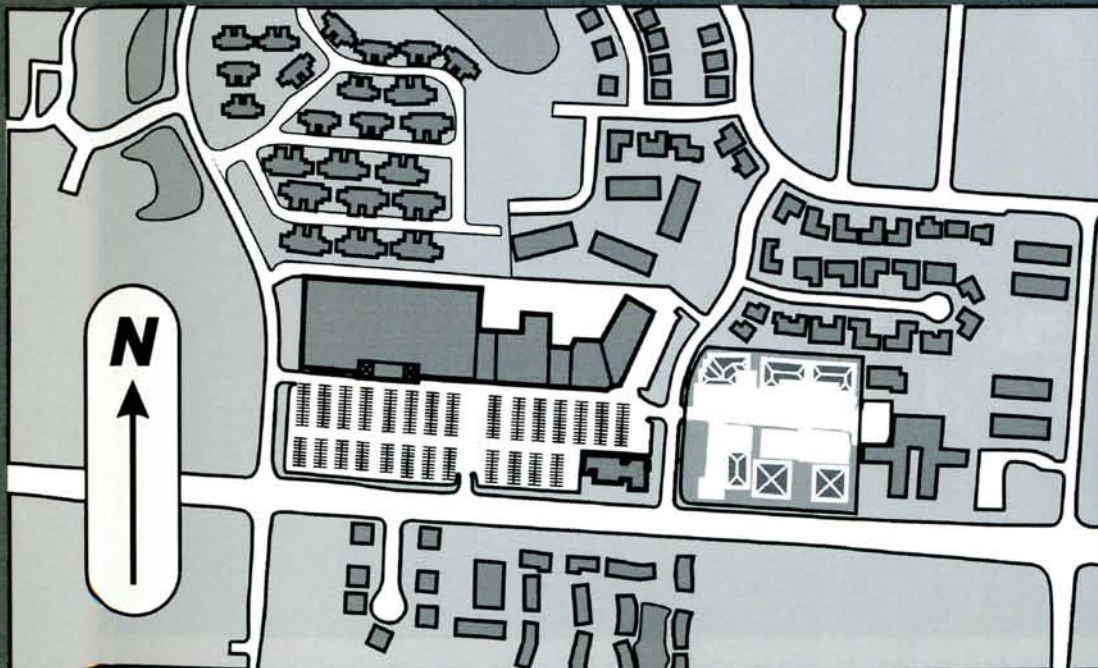
Office spaces	
5 department heads	5 x 120s.f.
General director	180s.f.
Collective office	600s.f.
Racquetball courts (3)	3 x 800s.f.

### HYBRID:

Nautilus/ free weights	800s.f.
Cardio-fitness area	1400s.f.
Indoor track	(around other programming pieces).
Observation areas	700s.f.
Locker rooms (2)	2 x 900s.f.

### OTHER:

Support areas/storage	3800s.f.
Kitchen	400s.f.
Mechanical	15% gross total (63680s.f.) = 9500s.f.
Circulation, etc.	15% gross total (63680s.f.) = 9500s.f.



### PROPOSED SITE DATA:

**Total net building  
square footage:**  
82,680s.f.

**Site square footage:**  
240,000 s.f.

**South property line length:**  
502'-0"

**West property line length:**  
470'-0"





## ***SITE: Aerial Photographs***





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